The State of Nonprofit Websites in Minnesota:

Strategic Business Tools Or Just Virtual Filing Cabinets?

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August 2, 2017

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Abstract

Nonprofits account for just over 10% of the workforce in Minnesota (Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, 2014, p. 2), with thousands of organizations supporting people throughout the state with arts and cultural activities, human services programs, education, healthcare services, and much more. Each of these organizations has an important mission and a message they must communicate in order to receive donations, volunteers, and clients.

This research explores how social and human service nonprofit organizations in Minnesota communicate through their websites and what these organizations can do to make their web presence more effectively communicate their most important messages and reach valuable constituents. Through a literature review of relevant theories, a content analysis of many organizations' websites, and in-depth interviews with nonprofit website professionals, this study investigates what organizations are doing and what best practices are utilized. This study reviews the audiences that nonprofits seek to connect with, examines the features and content strategy organizations use, reviews the investment made in sites, and considers how organizations measure success.

About the Author

Tom Lany is a M.A. candidate in Strategic Communication at the University of Minnesota's School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Tom has always had a strong interest in digital communication and the web. He currently works as Online Marketing Manager at Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, a large social service nonprofit organization with a statewide presence in Minnesota. Tom became interested in applying the communication theories he studied in the Strategic Communication M.A. program to nonprofit websites. While there is some literature on how to develop a solid web presence in the for-profit space, little research has been done in this area among nonprofit organizations. Tom holds a B.A. in Communication Studies from Gustavus Adolphus College.

Introduction

Across the state of Minnesota, there are thousands of nonprofit organizations, many of which have websites to promote their services, ask for donations, recruit volunteers, and share news and information about their mission. The non-profit sector is a significant force in Minnesota, accounting for a significant portion of the economy, and the Internet is a significant modern tool for connecting with people. Given the importance of this sector and tool, it is important to develop an understanding of how nonprofits use the Internet and the specific approaches they are using in order to connect with their audiences.

The nonprofit sector is large and active. Worldwide, it is a $1.3 trillion industry. If the nonprofit sector were a national economy, it would rank seventh in population and employ 4.4 percent of all people (Long, 2006, p. 240). In Minnesota, more than 10% of people are employed by nonprofits, according to the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (2014, p. 2). The sector continues to grow, as well, even growing slowly through the great recession in the first decade of the 2000s. This healthy and active sector features organizations working in many areas, including human services, education, healthcare, and the arts.

The Internet is a powerful, global communication medium. In the United States, 88% of adults use the Internet (Pew Research Center, 2017). More than three quarters of Americans own a smartphone (Smith, 2017). In addition to having access to the Internet, people spend a great deal of time using it, with the average adult spending ten hours thirty nine minutes using smartphones, tablets, TV, radio, computers and video games in early 2016 (Associated Press, 2016).

The Internet supports businesses in every sector of the economy. It helps businesses communicate, support customers, sell goods, and deliver service (Fisher, 2003, pp. 46). Directly, it has a $175 billion impact on the economy (Quelch, 2009). More than 1 million people are employed full time to conduct business on the Internet (Quelch, 2009).

While the Internet is an important communication and business tool for nonprofits and businesses alike, such was not always the case. In 1995, just 14% of Americans were online. Today, that number is over 80% (Fox, 2014). In just over 20 years, this medium has become significantly more relevant and advanced. While the Internet started out in the 1990s as a “geeky data-transfer system embraced by specialists,” it has turned into a “mass-adopted technology.” Many organizations created websites in the 1990s and early 2000s because competitors had them or someone heard about growth on the web (Fischer, 2003, p. 46). Organizations may not have invested significant strategic attention on how they were developed. This study looks at how nonprofits are using the Internet – whether they are using it as a strategic business tool or just as a virtual filing cabinet for information someone wanted to post about their organization.

Research Questions

Given the importance of website for nonprofits to connect with key constituencies, it is helpful to evaluate how nonprofit are currently performing, what they are doing well, and where they can improve. In order to understand the current state of nonprofit websites in Minnesota, this study evaluates the following research questions.

1. How do nonprofits in Minnesota use their website to connect with donors, volunteers, and people seeking services?
2. What are the key elements of a robust website for Minnesota nonprofits? What kinds of content, design and functionality are needed to produce a best-in-class experience? How advanced is the functionality found on Minnesota nonprofit's websites?
3. How do organizations invest time and effort into their websites?
4. What is the purpose of Minnesota nonprofits' websites and how do organizations measure their success?

Through this research, this study examines how nonprofits are currently using their websites. The first question evaluates the audiences organizations seek to serve. Donors, volunteers, and people seeking services are common key audiences referenced on the homepage of many nonprofit websites, as evidenced by preliminary research. This study evaluates which audiences organizations choose to focus on and why. This study also delves into the kind of features, content, and design found on nonprofit websites, determines how strong these aspects are, and why organizations choose to work on specific items. Through interviews with organizations, this study looks at the kind of investment organizations make in their websites, in terms of time and effort, to determine how they seek to achieve their goals. Lastly, this study considers what nonprofits consider their purpose to be on the web and how they measure their work. In order to answer these questions, this research includes a content analysis of numerous websites and expert interviews to better understand the state of Minnesota non-profit websites.

Hypothesis

Websites are an important communication medium for many nonprofit organizations. They require upkeep, maintenance, and continuous improvement in order to remain relevant. Based on my experience working in the nonprofit sector and initial cursory evaluation of sites, I made hypotheses about how many organizations develop and manage their websites.

How do nonprofits in Minnesota use their website to connect with donors, volunteers, and people seeking services?

Nonprofits seek to serve many audiences through their websites. That said, organizations typically select a few audiences to focus on when developing marketing and business plans. Their websites should serve the audiences identified through this process. For nonprofits that need donations in order to provide their service, but have little trouble acquiring clients (such as those that serve overseas or receive clients through direct referral sources), much of the website will likely focus on donors, as they are the group the organization needs to reach with persuasive messaging. For organizations that need to acquire clients (where there is not a state agency or other source that provides a constant stream of clients), serving prospective clients will likely be a key focus of the website. Some organizations need to acquire people in both groups and will likely feature content that appeals to both. Volunteer opportunities may be less likely to be highlighted on nonprofit websites. While volunteers are critical to the success of organizations, financial donations and clients may have a more direct impact on organizations' bottom lines.

What are the key elements of a robust website for Minnesota nonprofits? What kinds of content, design, and functionality are needed to produce a best-in-class experience? How advanced is the functionality found on Minnesota nonprofit's websites?

Content, technology and design are all important aspects of creating a high quality website in any sector. For many organizations, particularly smaller organizations that must work hard to stay solvent and want the majority of their funds to go directly toward service-based activities, maintaining an robust web universe may prove to be challenging. First and foremost, good, up-to-date information about what the organization does, presented in a way that showcases the organization's unique value to their key audiences, is a critical first step. A modern, clean mobile design is likely also important. Due to the expense and complexity of these initiatives, many organizations will likely struggle to achieve advanced level data processing on the web and will likely be focused on providing information through their website.

How do organizations invest time and effort into their websites?

Organizations invest varying amounts of time and effort in their websites, depending on how important the website is to their organization and the size of their organization. For smaller organizations, time will probably be at a premium and the investment will likely be smaller, as they are likely to have smaller budgets and small marketing staffs (if at all). Investment will also likely depend on the need for marketing in order to get an acceptable amount of donations and clients to keep the organization operational. At some organizations, much of the funding and client base comes directly from government-based referral sources, while others must invest more in consumer-based marketing to attain new clients. Overall, many organizations will likely struggle to develop the web presence they want based on the size of their teams and budgets they have. Many will likely struggle with out-of-date content and will not have advanced data processing functionality.

What is the purpose of Minnesota nonprofits' websites and how do organizations measure their success?

Like most companies, nonprofits will measure their success by looking at their overall organizational marketing objectives. If they are able to obtain and retain clients, receive donations, and sign up volunteers through the way their website speaks to external constituents, most organizations will feel they are successful. Some organizations will look at some basic statistics, such as page views, to monitor the progress of their websites, but most will struggle to quantify how actions taken on their website lead to specific actions.

Overall, most nonprofits have a story tell about how they make a difference in people's lives. While not all nonprofits have large budgets, the most successful will use their website to tell a compelling story that showcases their organization's unique value in the community.

Literature Review

In order to better understand how others have conducted similar research and discover research that already exists in this area, a review of literature was conducted. The literature review also helped with the development of research questions and with understanding what factors would be most important to evaluate.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion was developed in the 1970s and 1980s by John Cacioppo and Richard Petty to suggest there are two different ways people process persuasive messages. Some people process messages by way of the central route, where they think directly about the issue under consideration (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981, p. 262 & 1987, p. 41). The other method people use is the peripheral route, where they use less direct information to make a decision (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981, p. 262 & 1987, p. 42), such as their impression of management motives, their personal role, or the message's source to determine meaning (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981, p. 263).

According to the model, in order for someone to make a long-term behavioral change, they must have active cognitive involvement with the decision (known as "elaboration") by relating it to information previously stored in their memory. Many persuasive messages presented to people on a day-to-day basis are of relatively low importance (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981, p. 263 & 1987, p. 43). In some situations, such as an important issue or argument, people will spend a great amount of time thinking or elaborating on the message (Cacioppo & Petty, 1987, p. 43). Whether people use the central or peripheral model, it is important to note that people must have an active involvement with persuasive messages in order to make a change.

It is important to note that people do not process each of the thousands of persuasive messages they receive each day using detailed mental elaboration techniques. Two key factors that determine how people process messages are motivation and ability (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981, p. 263 & 1987, p. 43). People become more motivated to process messages that are of higher personal relevance and also for messages that have dissonance with the information they have already. People can have trouble processing messages that are incomprehensible, where they do not have a framework for relating it to their existing beliefs, or when they are distracted (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981, p. 263 & 1987, p. 43). If someone is both motivated and able to process a message, they will process it. They will first pay attention, then comprehend, elaborate, integrate, and then form an enduring attitude change.

The authors of this theory claimed the central route is a difficult way to change attitudes. Many items are too complex for the average person to understand and process. Getting people to express interest in processing an idea, think about it, and getting them to believe the evidence provided can be difficult as well (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981, p. 266). With the peripheral route, people pay less attention to the issue at hand and more attention to who is endorsing the idea or how the idea is being endorsed. (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981, p. 267) This method will not be as permanent in influencing people and will require re-intervention. Influencing through the peripheral approach is more likely to be successful in many situations, because it does not require people to actively engage in the issue at hand, which may be more difficult, especially if the topic is not of personal interest (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981, pp. 263-267).

The Elaboration Likelihood Model is important to this research about nonprofit websites in that the way people process information will impact the information they retain. With millions of individual websites on the Internet, content creators need to recognize that people pay attention to more than just the words they read when processing information. Visual cues, design, and endorsement by others may all contribute to the way people process information they read on the web. If someone has more knowledge about a topic, they may be more likely to engage with the content directly. When developing websites for people who have less investment in a topic, organizations should be certain to keep content simple and ensure it is easy to access for those who may be processing through the peripheral route.

Heuristic Systematic Model

Shelly Chaiken developed the Heuristic Systemic Model of Persuasion in the 1980s. Chaiken wrote that people often change their opinions based on only limited information processing (Chaiken, 1987, p. 3). The model suggests that people develop internal rules for processing information based on their past experience and observation. People then look at the structural characteristics of the message (such as message length), characteristics of the person delivering the message (likeability, expertise, appearance, etc.), and audience response to the message in reaching decisions (Chaiken, 1987, p. 4).

For instance, people may have learned that experts are usually more knowledgeable than non-experts and be more likely to trust their expertise (Chaiken, 1987, p. 4). People are also more likely to agree with people they like, because they have learned that people they like are usually similar to them (Chaiken, 1987, p. 4). People may develop and understand that longer, more detailed arguments are more likely to be correct based on their past experience, as these arguments are more likely to have been more researched (Chaiken, 1987, p. 4).

The Heuristic Systematic Model suggests that these simple rules control information processing and that they can control a person's view of the overall message and agreement with it, without impacting a person's view or acceptance of the persuasive messaging used to back up the argument (Chaiken, 1987, p. 6). People make decisions quickly, and may make decisions through the Heuristic Systematic Model with little active control or attention – perhaps being unaware they made a decision or changed their mind (Chaiken, 1987, p. 6).

The Heuristic Systematic Model is similar to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, but there are notable differences. The Heuristic Systematic Model suggests that people's primary goal in analyzing messages is to assess the accuracy of the message's conclusion. In contrast, the Elaboration Likelihood Model suggests that people may use the central or peripheral route for processing different messages (Chaiken, 1987, p. 7).

There are a few requirements for a person to be able to process information through the Heuristic Systematic Model. First, this model assumes that the person has had sufficient prior interactions with persuasive messages to develop persuasive rules (Chaiken, 1987, p. 31). Second, a person must have stored these rules in their memory. Third, they must have knowledge structures developed so that they can access this prior knowledge when they are presented with extrinsic presentation cues. Lastly, messages must have cues that can be processed heuristically, such as a speaker that can be analyzed (Chaiken, 1987, p. 32).

In summary, the Heuristic Systemic Model is really a model for describing the effortless processing of information (Chaiken, 1987, p. 32). This model suggests that people do not really analyze arguments in depth. Chaiken noted that this could lead to people making less than optimal decisions (Chaiken, 1987, p. 32). People might make different decisions if they invested time and effort to comprehend and elaborate on the persuasive messages being shared (Chaiken, 1987, p. 32). Decisions made through this processing mode are also less likely to stay static over time – the person processing the information may change their mind later (Chaiken, 1987, p. 33). This model explains how a person, who may spend little time or thought on information processing, assesses messages they receive. While Chaiken focused on the heuristic model, she did describe a systematic model of information processing as well. The systematic model requires much more effort, but people can closely read and seek to understand the meaning of information they are consuming by carefully analyzing the messages they receive. When people process information this way, it will take them more time and information before they change their opinion (Chaiken, 1987, p. 6).

In the context of the web, people may use simple, standard cues to process information as the Heuristic Systematic Model describes. They may look at how much expertise is portrayed, how similar the people on the website are to them and what the website looks like. Considering the way people process information, it is important to display expertise, obtain endorsements, and create content that is easy to digest. The Heuristic Systematic Model also suggests that understanding the audience is critical. Because people want to see information catered towards them and people like them, understanding the audience is paramount.

Low Involvement Model

With large sums of money spent on television commercials and other forms of advertisements, one may wonder how effective advertising is or even if it is effective at all. Herbert Krugman set out to explain what information people retain after watching television advertisements with his Low Involvement Model. He suggests that people have different levels of involvement with different advertisements and different advertisement media (Krugman, 1965, p. 354-355). Because of this difference, ads impact people in different ways.

People’s involvement with advertisements can be either high or low. When someone has low involvement, they do not have much personal interest in it (Krugman, 1965, p. 355). In contrast, when someone has high involvement, they are interested in the subject matter, actively analyzing it and connecting it to other life experiences or products (known as "bridging experiences") (Krugman, 1965, p. 355). These two types of involvement influence people differently. When people have low involvement, they will slowly develop new perceptions of a product or idea, then develop positive associations with the brand, perhaps make a purchase and change their mind over time with repeated exposure (Krugman, 1965, p. 355). Often, someone will make a purchase before they make a conscious change to their beliefs. For someone who is highly involved, the person will have conscious thoughts about the matter at hand, and their beliefs will change accordingly (Krugman, 1965, p. 355). With low involvement, people pay more attention to logos, packages, and design attributes, and attitude change takes time.

Krugman's research initially analyzed people's involvement with television. Curious why such advertising was effective, he determined that people typically have low involvement with television – they see messages many times. While not always actively engaged, this exposure creates positive brand associations over time. Thus, with repetitive exposure, people make changes (Krugman, 1965, p. 354). While low involvement is most common, people may pay more or less attention to specific advertisements, depending on their interest. After his first study, Krugman applied his model to other media. When analyzing people's involvement with magazines, he realized that the medium encourages a different kind of behavior. Television is animate – the program controls the pace, and the viewer has little opportunity to control or re-watch past segments. With magazines, the reader has much more control, and is the animate force. The reader gets to decide what they read and for how long. Thus, a magazine reader is likely more involved with the medium and its advertising (Preston, 1970, pp. 288-289).

In summary, Krugman's Low Involvement Model suggests that people have different levels of involvement with different products and media. Understanding the audience when developing websites is important. If the audience is less invested in the product or service they are reading about, they may need simple information, copy, and graphics. If they are more invested, such as an audience may be when contemplating a major personal life change, they may need more information, blogs, and in-depth articles. An easy to navigate and clean visual design could make the site easier for people to get information. Understanding the audience and their information needs can be helpful when deciding on how much depth and information to provide on a website.

Hierarchy of Effects

Frequently, people see an advertisement repeatedly over a significant period of time before they make a product purchase. Advertisements impact people on a long-term basis, since they often do not make an immediate purchase. People's attitudes, however, still may be impacted in the short term. The Hierarchy of Effects theory provides a model for this change, suggesting that there are seven steps that people must move through in order to be ready to make a purchase. These steps are (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961, p. 59):

1. First, people are unaware of the existence of a product or service in question.
2. Next, they must become aware of the existence of a product.
3. People must learn what a product has to offer.
4. Next, people have to like the product.
5. As people get closer to making a purchase, they will develop a point of preference for the product or service over other possible alternatives.
6. People must believe that making a purchase or change to try the new product would be wise.
7. Finally, people must actually make the purchase or change.

For some product decisions, people might travel through these steps rapidly – making an actual purchase soon after becoming aware of the existence of a product. In other cases, particularly where there is a high economic or psychological cost, it may take people more time to move through the steps (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961, p. 60).

Many advertisements and communications focus on getting people to make an immediate purchase. While this is an important step, advertisements may need to work in other areas of the process to motivate people to make change. For instance, in the car industry, new products are introduced at the beginning of the model year, and companies move towards encouraging immediate purchases towards the end of the cycle (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961, p. 60).

Market research can be conducted to figure out which steps require the most change and where people need to be motivated in order to consider purchasing a product. In general, people need cognitive information to understand facts about a product early in the process. Then, their attitudes and feelings need to be changed to develop a preference. Lastly, people can be stimulated to make a purchase (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961, p. 60).

The Hierarchy of Effects model can be helpful for understanding the process people must go through to learn more about, and eventually select, a product or service. Many websites display large buttons that encourage people to take the next step. Figuring out what step to encourage people to take may require some careful planning (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961, p. 61). This model provides a framework for understanding the steps people take when making decisions and how to encourage someone to take the next step. It underscores the importance of leading people through complex processes, so they actually complete them.

Media Richness Theory

The Media Richness Theory was developed by Richard L. Daft and Robert H. Lengel to describe how and why organizations process information. It also looks at different ways people within organizations share information, and what is most effective. The theory suggests organizations process information to reduce uncertainty and to reduce equivocality (Daft & Lengel, 1986, p. 554). Uncertainty occurs when people need more information. Equivocality appears when there is not a clear answer that can be found from a body of existing knowledge or where multiple interpretations can occur. When questions of this nature come up, managers often work together to find a solution (Daft & Lengel, 1986, p. 554).

Media Richness Theory is based on several assumptions about how organizations process information. It assumes organizations are open social systems that must process information. In addition, it assumes that a great deal of information is fuzzy, which requires organizations to develop mechanisms capable of dealing with this uncertainty (Daft & Lengel, 1986, p. 555). In cases of uncertainty, the questions are much more cut and dried – data can be collected to produce a best-case response. It also assumes that individuals process information, but that organization information processing is more than the processing that happens at the individual level. A diverse group may need to work together to share and process new information. Lastly, it assumes that information processing is influenced by the way the organization divides and organizes itself (Daft & Lengel, 1986, pp. 555-556).

Uncertainty and equivocality both represent situations where clarity is lacking. Organizations use different methods to solve these two kinds of problems, however. When there is uncertainty, organizations try to find decision rules, information sources, and structural designs. When there is equivocality, staff must often work together to find solutions on their own. Quite often, organizations face problems where some degree of uncertainty and some degree of equivocality are present. This theory suggests that organizations often need to integrate these two approaches – using both uncertainty and equivocality techniques to solve problems (Daft & Lengel, 1986, pp. 555-557).

Organizations often structure themselves in order to facilitate optimal dissemination of information and to reduce equivocality and uncertainty (Daft & Lengel, 1986, p. 559). Related to uncertainty, organizations have formal systems that deliver reports to managers on such matters as productivity and absenteeism. Liaisons and task forces allow organizations to exchange information between units to reduce uncertainty. For processing equivocality, organizations need to relay rich information, which is less text based and offers more opportunities for feedback, personalization, and language variety. Face-to-face and telephone based conversations are richer than document-based communication. Because organizations deal with both uncertainty and equivocality, they need to process both kinds of information. The theory suggests that seven communication structural characteristics can be used to reduce uncertainty and equivocality (Daft & Lengel, 1986, p. 560). In order from most likely to reduce equivocality to most likely to reduce information richness, the media are: group meetings, integrators, direct contact, planning, reports, formation information systems, and rules and regulations (Daft & Lengel, 1986, pp. 560-562).

Organizations utilize this model (perhaps unknowingly) by utilizing different kinds of technology, structures for interdepartmental relations, and environmental structures, which are designed to solve the kinds of challenges they need to solve. When situations can be analyzed with a standard set of criteria, and when there is little variety in the kind of data provided, standard processes, procedures, and memos can be used. If the information is less easily analyzed, face-to-face meetings may be required. If there is a high variety of information presented, more advanced quantitative data analysis may be required. Finally, if there is a great deal of information variety and it is difficult to analyze, frequent in-person meetings and more complex reports may be needed.

A similar formula can be used for determining what departments need to do in order to work with one another, though the key factors at play here are how different they are and how interdependent they are. If departments are similar and not interdependent, simple rules may govern their interaction. If they are very different, more meetings and richer media may be needed to resolve differences. If departments are similar but highly interdependent, some databases and more complex planning or budgeting may be needed. Finally, if there is both a high degree of difference and a high interdependence present, full-time integrators or task forces may be needed to process the complexity of the information that must be processed (Daft & Lengel, 1986, p. 564). Lastly, if organizations are rapidly changing or competitive, they may need to collect and share more information than if they are more stable (Daft & Lengel, 1986, p. 566).

In summary, depending on the kinds of information that needs to be processed, organizations develop different tools and structures in order to best process that information. Quite often, the challenge for organizations comes in the processing and dissemination of information, not in the process of data collection. Organizations must develop effective tools for processing information relevant to their business in order to be successful.

While this theory applies most directly to organizational communication, it can also be applied to web communication. Some information that people seek out on the web is very cut and dried and can be understood by looking at a chart or reading explanatory text. To conquer equivocality, people may need help that a text (or even video-based) web experience may not be able to help solve. People may need to use the web as a vehicle to access help that they can receive in person where equivocality may exist. Having an understanding of the problems people are trying to conquer can help an organization develop the most effective web experience.

Extended Model of Internet Commerce Adoption (eMICA)

A study by Ping-Ho Ting analyzed the top 100 hotel websites using the extended Model of Internet Commerce Adoption (eMICA) model developed by Lois Burgess and Joan Cooper. This model suggests that websites are at different stages with regards to their ability to serve customers. The study found that different countries' websites developed at different stages and that Asian hotels currently had more features than others, while European websites were very robust. American hotel sites performed well on web 2.0 features. The three stages discussed in the model include promotion, provision and processing (Ting, 2013, pp. 284-285, 290-291).

Within the promotion stage, organizations have information available. Within this section, there are two layers. In the basic information layer, basic contact information is available. As sites move to the rich information layer, more information is available, like costs, key contacts and more detailed information. In the provision stage, people are able to interact more directly with the organization. Within the provision stage, there are three layers. In the low interactivity layer, they can fill out forms for a few key actions. In the medium interactivity layer, more interaction with services is available. In the high interactivity layer, more advanced graphics may be available. Lastly, in the processing stage, advanced applications serve people with sophisticated functionality. As organization and company's websites progress through this model, more interactive functionality becomes available. This study can serve as a tool for rating websites and assessing their stage of interactivity (Ting, 2013, pp. 285-286).

Discussion

The models discussed above provide useful frameworks for a study on evaluating the effectiveness of websites as valuable communication tools. The first five theories reviewed (Elaboration Likelihood Model, Heuristic Systematic Model, Low Involvement Model, Hierarchy of Effects and Media Richness Theory) are traditional communication theories based in psychological research, which explain how people process information presented to them. Many of these theories were developed before the Internet was in prevalent use but serve as a useful guides for how people process messages they receive in many mediums.

Elaboration Likelihood Model and Hierarchy of Effects are particularly relevant models for this research. The idea of central and peripheral route processing found in the Elaboration Likelihood Model is important to consider as it states that many people do not thoroughly analyze issues through the central route, but instead rely on peripheral processing (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981, p. 262 & 1987, p. 41-42). This means that websites should be clearly written, digestible, and visually appealing to best serve these users' needs. Hierarchy of Effects considers several stages where people are in a decision making process. In developing web content, having an understanding of where constituents are in the process can help an organization develop content that will more effectively meet the needs of the website's visitors.

The Extended Model of Internet Commerce Adoption (eMICA) more closely relates to how people process information on the Internet. This model's specific application to digital platforms makes it a useful tool that can be used to directly rank where websites fall on the scale. While this is helpful, the model focuses heavily on e-commerce activity, while this study's research, as discussed below, found that many nonprofits utilized their websites for storytelling and brand building and focused less on transactional activity. With this disconnect between what the model is measuring and how many nonprofits use their websites, scores should be reviewed with an understanding that many nonprofits do not aspire to build transactional websites, which are ranked highly on this scale.

Similar Studies

Over the past few years, several studies have been conducted on website content. Some have been conducted in the nonprofit sector. These studies were reviewed in order to get a better sense of the work that has been done in this area, so this work can build on what has already been done, add to the body of knowledge, and utilize the best possible methods for answering the research questions. Most studies reviewed utilize the content analysis approach, as it allows close analysis of the text on several different websites. A number of these studies mentioned this approach, and while there were points of overlap, many used slightly different methodology, depending on the research question being utilized.

Richard Waters and Kristin LeBlanc Feneley discussed the importance of reaching donors and using stewardship techniques to retain these supporters. This study reviewed nonprofit websites and social media pages to see how they demonstrated gratitude, fulfilled obligations to donors, reported on their work, and nurtured existing relationships (Waters & Feneley, 2013, 216-217). The study used a content analysis and looked for the presence of two-way symmetrical communication and interactive videos. It found that most organizations did not use social media for the majority of their donor communications. While these organizations communicate differently, the official organization website was the hub for information for donors (Waters & Feneley, 2013, 221-222 & 225-226).

Ebru Uzunǒglu conducted a study of Turkish nonprofit websites, looking at whether or not they worked to build relationships with constituents. This study analyzed several attributes to determine how well websites serve users. Factors reviewed include: ease of interface (site links and a search box present), usefulness of information (media and volunteer audiences were the focus here), conservation of users (determined by the presence of important information on the homepage), generation of return visits (demonstrated by the freshness of news and blogs), and opportunity for user response. While the site interface varied substantially from site to site, this study found that many nonprofits viewed websites as an archive for information, considering them “a monological vehicle, rather than providing dialogic communication.” (Uzunŏglu, 2014, pp. 114)

Leah Beopple conducted a study looking at the use of guilt on weight loss and eating disorder websites. Through a content analysis, she found that, unfortunately, many sites contained dangerous negative content. The study found that more sites had objectifying messages than praise messages on them as they sought to interest people in weight loss products or services (Beopple, 2016, pp. 98, 100).

Craig Parker analyzed small and medium size organization websites and how design features impact the discoverability of content. This study reviewed several factors, including: the consistency of navigation, background, service information, mission/value, interactive features (the ability to complete transactions), as well as navigation, page types, and page body. The study determined that content menus and location might have some impact on content performance (Parker, 2015, pp. 140-141, 157).

Based on this literature review and previous browsing of nonprofit websites, it is clear many organizations, particularly those with fewer resources, have websites with significant unmet potential. In the literature review, many sites were regarded as not serving the target audience as effectively as they could on the various scales used. While most should have basic information, few are likely using the Internet to its full potential to deliver services and provide interactive experiences for key constituents.

Content Analysis

Methods

To collect information about how nonprofits are using websites, a content analysis was conducted during the months of April and May of 2016. This method allowed close analysis of many nonprofit sites, and it supplied clear, concrete data to be collected for each element analyzed. This research methodology was developed taking the work done by other content analysis pieces reviewed in the literature review, while also directly answering this research study's unique questions about specific non-profit web audiences.

Forty nonprofit websites in the social and human service sectors were analyzed in total. Websites were selected from the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits online listing of nonprofit organizations. As the largest statewide nonprofit trade association in the country, this association has more than 2,100 members, representing nonprofits in all activity areas, Minnesota geographic regions, and of varying budget sizes. The organizations chosen for this content analysis were selected from this list using a relatively random process of selecting every few organizations, starting at the beginning of the list. I served as the only coder for this research.

The complete list of questions used in the content analysis can be found in *Appendix 1*, and descriptions of the questions can be found below. The results can be found in *Appendix 2*, and the results stratified by the organizations' annual income can be found in *Appendix 3*.

Background Questions

First, the coder was asked to provide the name of the organization and the web URL being analyzed. Next, the coder was asked to identify the primary audience for the site (donors, volunteers, people accessing services, or not clear), based on a quick view of the homepage.

Audience Questions

To answer the first research question, about how Minnesota nonprofits use their websites to connect with donors, volunteers, and people seeking services, a section of questions were developed for each audience. Taking the eMICA model into consideration, as well as factors discussed in literature reviewed and types of features that were typically present on nonprofit websites, these questions were designed to see what features are present on nonprofit websites. The questions started out simpler, seeking to understand whether basic pieces of information were available, and then asked questions about provisioning and processing stage activities.

Donor Questions

In the donor section, the coder was first asked to examine whether different ways of making gifts were available on the site (mail, credit card, stock, planned). Most of these kinds of gift transactions invariably must occur offline. That said, many credit card gifts are made online. This study provided an opportunity to test whether donors could make a gift online. They were also asked how many clicks it took from the homepage to make a gift with a credit card. The coder was also asked whether stories and thank you messages were present on the site, indicating the presence of additional informational resources about giving. Lastly, the coder was asked to evaluate the quality of written content on a Likert scale, and to evaluate whether communication was positive or negative.

Volunteer Questions

In the volunteer section, the coder was asked to analyze whether or not contact information for volunteering was present, whether or not specific volunteer opportunities existed, and whether it was possible to sign up online. If people could sign up online, this represented a provisioning level activity. The coder was also asked if the tone of communications was positive or negative and to rate the quality of the writing on a Likert scale.

Accessing Services Questions

The accessing services section asked a number of questions about how the organizations provided service information and delivered their services. First, the coder was asked if basic information, like information on how to access services and contact information was present. They were also asked if it was possible to sign up for service online. Next, the coder was asked to evaluate whether or not information about the cause or issue was present online. The coder was also asked if other service delivery information, like simple information for existing customers, or forums/discussion boards were present. A question about whether services were available online or offline was also asked, as was a question about the focus of website content (organizational vs. issue). Lastly, as with the other audiences, a general question about writing quality, as well as a question about the positivity of content, was asked.

Functionality Questions

In the second major section of the content analysis, the second research question, around functionality and usability, was addressed. Several items, including interactivity, navigation, functionality, usability, and innovations, were analyzed.

In the interactivity section, the coder was asked to check whether or not specific site elements, like a blog, social media, forums, etc. were present. In the navigation section, the coder was asked whether or not the navigation was clear, consistent, and useful. The coder was asked to assess functionality and usability, as well. Functionality was defined as whether the site was useful and free of item like errors and broken links. Usability and innovativeness were much more subjective. Where most of the questions on the questionnaire asked yes/no questions and related clearly to items that either were or were not on the site, these questions allowed the coder to provide a subjective answer about the quality of the user interface and how well it was executed.

eMICA Question

Lastly, the coder was asked to place the site in a category on the eMICA scale. The eMICA scale is described above in the literature review. A chart summarizing the key attributes of each stage and layer is available below (Ting, 2013, p. 286).

Stage 1 – Promotion	
Layer 1 – Basic Information	Basic contact information
Layer 2 – Rich Information	More information is available, like costs and key contacts
Stage 2 – Provision	
Layer 1 – Low Interactivity	Forms are available
Layer 2 – Medium Interactivity	A greater ability to interact with the organization's services is available
Layer 3 – High Interactivity	Advanced graphics/interactivity available
Stage 3 – Processing	Advanced applications allow people to have a digital experience throughout the service delivery process

Results

In the 40 websites analyzed, results showed that nonprofits across the state of Minnesota had some real strengths, but also that there was opportunity for improvement. Most had several key features, like donation forms that were easy to use and sought to meet the needs of the people they serve. More opportunity was present in the organization's ability to collect information and allow people to interact with and signup for specific opportunities.

Audience Questions

The first key question asked the coder to determine the key audience for the site. Donors were regarded as the primary audience for many sites (40%), but people accessing services were a slightly more common target, at 45% of sites. It is interesting to note that in 15% of sites, there was no clear audience – these sites simply provided information or news about what the organization did on the homepage. For sites appealing to donors, information about making a gift, charity events and organizational impact was often present. Information about services was common on sites that had homepages targeted at people accessing services. A number of sites simply had a mission and vision statement on the homepage. This kind of information, along with news, was common on sites with less clear primary homepage audiences. None of the sites visited were targeted towards volunteers.

Donor Questions

Next, the coder looked at the donor information. The coder was asked if the site had options to donate in several different contexts. Fifty-seven percent of sites offered a mail option, 90% offered the ability to donate with a credit card, 37.5% offered the ability to make an in-kind gift, 25% offered stock giving options, and 25% offered a planned giving option. Most sites had the ability for donors to make a donation online with a credit card, and this option was readily accessible from the homepage. When looking at websites with a donation form, on all, but one site, a donation form was two or fewer clicks from the homepage. Clearly, putting an online donation form up was a high priority for organizations. Other options for making a gift were less prevalent. While a handful of sites only offered a mailing address for mailing a donation, they were few and far between. Many sites did not have an address for mail donations. About a quarter of sites had in-kind donation options. This option was particularly prevalent on sites where the organization distributed goods as a core part of its mission. Other giving options, like stock and planned giving options, were much less prevalent and were more commonly offered by larger organizations. For stock giving options, hardly any organizations with annual revenue under $5 million offered stock giving options, but over half with revenue over this level did. A similar phenomenon was true for major giving options. While only a quarter of the sites had major giving options, 75% of those with more than $20 million in annual revenue provided information on how to make a major legacy gift.

The next questions in the donor section addressed site content. Only 13% of websites thanked donors. Just 12.5% of sites provided some information about what the organization did with the funds it received and/or had donor impact stories clearly connected with the giving pages. Many organizations asked for money on their websites, but they failed to thank or tell the donor why their contributions matter and make a difference on their websites.

Finally, the last question in the donor section assessed whether the majority of communication was positive (showing what could happen with the donor's support) or negative (showing tragedies that needed to be solved). The majority of the sites were indistinguishable – they were fairly neutral. They talked about a problem and said that help was needed, but did not go out of their way to be positive or negative. Some sites (27.5%) were positive. None of the sites were regarded as being negative.

Volunteer Questions

Next, volunteer sections of the websites were analyzed. Only about half of site (57%) offered information on how to volunteer. Many sites had no volunteer opportunities or section on the site. Only 37.5% had specific opportunities (not just general information) posted. Even fewer

(35%) had information on how to sign up for specific opportunities. In general, websites that allowed people to sign up for opportunities offered a form that collected information about them.

Lastly, in the volunteer section, the coder was asked to rate whether communications were positive or negative. Much like the donor section, this question was regarded as “not distinguishable” for many sites. These sites talked about volunteer opportunities, but really did not give much detail about who would be served or why volunteers should serve. Some sites were positive. None were regarded as negative (using fear of negative situations as a sales tool).

Accessing Services Questions

Next, several questions addressed accessing services that the organizations offered. Services were defined broadly – some organizations provided a tangible good, while others offered a service or training. In some cases, the person receiving the service paid for it, and in other cases, there was another payer. Regardless, all organizations offered some sort of product or service. About 90% of sites provided information about accessing services. Interestingly, not all sites gave information about how to get service. While all sites promoted a product or service, not all provided information on accessing it. Seventy-five percent of sites provided contact information for accessing services, and only 12.5% offered a way to sign up directly online (as opposed to making a phone call or sending an email message). The percentage of sites offering people the ability to sign up online did not increase among larger organizations.

Some sites (27%) provided information on the issue the organization supported or sought to solve (meaning, for example, that they provided information about cancer if they were a cancer-related organization). Most organizations did not provide detailed information on the cause they sought to further. Most sites also did not provide much information for current customers/clients/service recipients. While a few had a portal for this audience, 82.5% had no information for those currently receiving services. In addition, only 7.5% of sites had an interactive discussion board or place for members or others in the community to interact and learn more about others.

Perhaps the reason many sites did not have much information for client audiences online was because the majority of their service delivery took place in an offline context. When determining whether it appeared the organization delivered service in an online or offline environment or both, none of the organizations offered service in a purely online environment. Just 7.5% offered service in both contexts, while the rest (over 90%) of these organizations only offered service in an offline context. When looking at whether the site focused predominantly on an issue or cause (such as providing information about domestic violence for a domestic violence shelter) or information on the organization's operations, 97.5% focused on service and information about the organization.

Lastly, in the service delivery section, the coder looked at whether communications were positive or negative, in the same way as the previous sections. Here the majority (62.5%) provided information that was not distinguishable as being either positive or negative. Interestingly, one organization used negative scare tactics in wording, where this was not done for volunteers or donors.

Functionality Questions

Next, the second research question considered general functionality and usability of the sites analyzed. In this section, several questions addressed the overall quality and functionality of the sites studied. In the first question, the sites were combed for the presence of several features: static content, blogs, news, social media, forum/discussion boards, and search functionality. Perhaps a given, all sites had static content on them. The other features were less prevalent, however. Overall, about three-quarters (72.5%) of sites had links to social media channels on them. Note that some of these sites may have had a social media presence, but links to social media were not prevalent. Just 32% of organizations had a news section. Larger organizations were much more likely to have a news section – 62.5% of organizations with an annual income over $20 million had a news section. In addition, just 25% of organizations had a blog. Only 32% of sites had search functionality. Again, this functionality was much more prevalent on the sites of larger organizations, where 75% of organizations with annual revenue over $20 million had search functionality. Just 5% of sites had forums or discussion boards for members and people in the community. For some items, like search functionality and news, larger organizations were far more likely to have the feature present on their site. For other items, this trend was not prevalent. All but one organization that had forums/discussion boards had an annual income of under $1 million. For the other features, organization size had less of an impact on the results.

Navigation and templates were also considered. Over 95% of sites had helpful navigation and had the same template in use throughout the site, contributing to an effective, usable site. The coder was also asked to rate website functionality (defined as no error pages, dead links, etc.). More than 90% of sites ranked “very well” or “moderately well.” While very few sites were rated as “extremely well,” most sites had good navigation. One site was rated as “slightly well,” as it had some broken links or visible error messages.

This study also addressed written text quality on a scale of one to five (with five being the highest quality and one being the lowest quality). Most sites (over 90%) received a three or four. A handful of sites received a one or two, because of extremely lengthy and/or poorly organized text.

Next, this study took a look as ease of accessing information, and finding information needed for this project. On most sites, it was “moderately easy” or “neither easy nor difficult.” Just five percent of sites were regarded as being “moderately difficult” to navigate.

In addition, the study looked at design. When rated as to how contemporary the site design was on a scale of one two five (with five being very contemporary and one being not contemporary), nearly all sites (more than 95%) received a two, three, or four, with almost equal distributions.

eMICA Question

Lastly, the coder was given the opportunity to rate the website on the eMICA scale, determining whether websites were in the promotion, provisioning, or processing stage. Overall, most sites were in the promotion stages or at the beginning of the provision stage. Some (20%) were in the promotion stage at the basic information layer and had just rudimentary information about their programs, services, and ways to get involved. Many more (42.5%) were in the promotion stage at the rich information layer and had more extensive information about programs and services, but few ways to get involved. Some sites (30%) were in the provision stage at the low interactivity layer. They had a great deal of information about their services and also some ways to get involved (such as sign up forms). A few sites (7.5%) were in the provision stage at the medium interactivity layer. They had a few more advanced interactive features. None of the sites viewed were regarded as being more advanced than this stage. It does appear that larger organizations may have had slightly more advanced web presences. When giving each layer a number, organizations with less than $1 million in annual revenue scored a 2.07, with promotion – rich information being a “2” and provision – low interactivity being a “3.” See

Appendix 2 for the full results and this numbering system in use. Organizations with over $20 million in annual revenue scored 2.625. The average organization scored a 2.25.

Discussion

Overall, Minnesota nonprofit websites had a strong base of information, with most sites regarded as not “difficult” to use to access information. That said, there is room for improvement for sites to more effectively serve their constituents and supporters.

When looking at the features nonprofits use to engage donors, volunteers, and people receiving service, there were several clear trends.

Audience Questions

It is clear that donors and people accessing services were the key targets for most nonprofit sites studied – with each receiving relatively similar tallies (40% and 45% respectively). It should be noted that 15% of sites do not clearly target a specific audience – they just provided general information about the organization. It appears some organizations had given less thought to what they wanted their site to achieve or who they wanted it to serve, and simply put information up about what they do in a way that made sense to an internal stakeholder – perhaps the person creating the site.

Donor Questions

In the donor service realm, organizations had certainly made a commitment to making it possible (and easy) to make a gift on their websites. No less than 90% of sites made it possible to make a gift with a credit card online. Small organizations, even those with less than $1 million in annual revenue, made it a priority to accept online donations (more than 78% of organizations did). Hardly any sites had a page with this functionality more than two clicks off of the homepage. Using the eMICA model, websites that offered service and allowed interaction (like a donation form) were more complex (and in the provisioning stage). It was interesting that many fewer sites (under 60%) offered an opportunity to make a gift by mail. This seemed to be a missed opportunity for people who may prefer to give in this way or may want to give from a corporate or individual checking account. Many sites did not offer planned giving or stock giving options, either. It seemed these are items nonprofits should strongly consider at least mentioning. These options were slightly more common on larger organization websites. While they may not be the most commonly requested items, planned giving and stock giving options represent a huge opportunity for nonprofits to receive large donations from people, who may be able to make a gift with non-cash assets or who may have an opportunity to make a gift at the end of their life.

Only a quarter of sites talked about what they did with donor gifts. This result suggests that most donors on nonprofit sites already might have been familiar with the work of the organizations to which they donated. It may make sense for organizations to invest some time (even if just a few hours) in crafting a story or two about where gifts go to encourage new donors and donors less familiar with the work of an organization. In addition, fewer than 15% of organizations thanked donors. While some sites may do so after they make a gift (as this cannot be tested without making a gift), expressing appreciation on the website would be an additional easy opportunity to thank donors.

Volunteer Questions

Examining the volunteer section of the results, many organizations (nearly 40%) did not have volunteer information on their websites. While some organizations might not have had opportunities available to post, there might have been information that would encourage a potential volunteer to get involved. Perhaps organizations could consider ways a volunteer or intern may be able to develop these kind of postings, which could help recruit even more volunteers. Even fewer sites (35%) had a specific volunteer opportunities posted that people could sign up for. While many organizations needed volunteers, many had not done the work to create specific opportunity postings or provide specific contact information that people could use to take action.

Accessing Services Questions

In the services realm, 90% of sites provided information on accessing services. While providing this information may seem critical, some organizations worked overseas in impoverished countries or had other people who reached out to clients directly. Other organizations received clients through referrals from government agencies or other organizations. Just 75% of organizations provided contact information for receiving services. Again, though some organizations could not take new clients directly, having some general information about what to do when looking for the service the organization provided would have been helpful to demonstrate how the organization works to make a difference in the lives of others.

Functionality Questions

Taking a look at the second research question, around site functionality, it was clear that while all sites made use of static content, not all used other kinds of site functionality. While some features might require a significant investment of time, like a blog and news section, a quarter of the sites did not have social media links and less than 25% had search functionality. While some small websites may not need this technology, many content management systems have search functionality built-in. Organizations should evaluate whether these features would be easy to implement and if they would enhance the visitor’s experience on their site.

When evaluating the overall ease of use, accessing information was rated either “moderately easy” or “neither easy nor difficult.” While this is not a low mark, there is room for more improvement, as 62% of sites received a two out of five (where five is the top score and one is the lowest).

eMICA Question

The final question, which applied the eMICA model, summarized the overall state of nonprofit websites in Minnesota. Many sites had a great deal of helpful information on them, but few used the website as a part of the service delivery model. For the most part, the sites were descriptive of the work the organizations were doing, but they did not let people take action or participate in the service in a digital context. In the for profit sector, some businesses operate almost exclusively as digital enterprises. E-commerce shopping sites are a good example. While there is a cost and mindset change that must take place to move organizations over to a digital realm, nonprofit organizations should consider how new digital technologies, available to an increasing degree each year, could make a difference in the work they are doing.

Interviews

Methods

In order to better understand how nonprofits use their websites, who they seek to target, what material they put up, and what kind of internal resources they have available, several interviews with nonprofit marketing and communication professionals were conducted. In total, nine interviews were conducted with nonprofit web marketing and/or marketing and communication leadership. In addition, the founder and former CEO of a local web development consulting firm specializing in nonprofit websites was also interviewed.

During the interviews, interviewees were asked several questions. Organizations were first asked to reflect on the audience they tried to reach on their website. After this, they were asked about the kind of content they put up on the website to reach this audience. Next, a question about the process for keeping content fresh was asked. This question helped to get more information on organizations' practices for updating information and ensuring it stayed current. Next, organizations were asked how they measure success. Lastly, organizations were asked to reflect on what the best nonprofit websites looked like, either by providing specific examples or by outlining attributes that made them successful. The complete list of questions that were posed to organizations are listed here:

1. What audience do you reach through your website?
2. What kinds of content do you put on your website? How do you decide what to put up?
3. Do you have any processes in place to keep the site fresh? Who makes sure it stays up-to-date?

4. How do you decide when to change the designs or add functionality into your website? Are there features you would like to add?
5. How do you measure success?
6. What do the best nonprofit websites look like?

For the interview with the web consultant, a similar, yet slightly different, set of questions was asked. A web consultant provides a process and expertise to help other organizations go through the process of designing their website, working with the expertise within the organization. While similar, the questions probed into how the consultant worked to help people the organization through each topic area and what they considered to be best practices in each area. Additional consultant questions included a question about how the consultant worked to suggest technologies to match the needs of the client and a question about how organizations could get the most out of working with an agency partner. The complete list of consultant questions is below.

1. How do you help clients think through who their key audiences should be for their websites? What audiences do many organizations try to reach? Do organizations need help in reaching the correct audiences?
2. How do you help organizations decide on what to put up on their websites – what kinds of content to put on their website?
3. How do you advise organizations on when to make changes to their site design or add significant functionality into their websites? How do you help them build appropriate plans?
4. How do you advise clients on technology that will best support their goals? Why Drupal? How do you develop toolsets that will benefit many organizations?

5. How do you measure success? What factors do you suggest organizations look at?
6. How can organizations get the most out of working with an agency partner?
7. What do the best nonprofit websites look like?

Results

Through the interview process, a great deal of insight was collected on how Minnesota nonprofits used their websites and how consultants helped with the process. Analysis on the interviewees' responses to each question is provided below.

Organizations

What audience do you reach through your website?

First, interviewees were asked what audience they try to reach through their website. Everyone who was interviewed discussed the people who receive/seek services, as well as supporters, who may be volunteers, donors, and in some cases political advocates. Where the organizations differed in response was where and how they prioritized these audiences.

Many organizations interviewed prioritized people receiving services. For these organizations, the people receiving services accounted for a great percentage of the organizations' revenue and/or acquiring new people to receive service was very important to the organizations' mission. In most cases, there was a financial incentive for these organizations to provide services to additional people. In interview four, the interviewee said that their organization's website focused almost exclusively on getting new members and retaining the members they already had. They looked at the revenue that each service brought in, as well as business priorities, when working on their website. In interview five, the interviewee talked about how revenue from donors only accounted for four percent of the organization's overall revenue, even though the organization sought contributions from donors. Encouraging people to learn more about their services and sign up was a much higher priority. In interview seven, the interviewee discussed how most of their work was focused on getting and retaining members. They produced content and conferences, and their support came from monetizing these efforts. As such, they were focused on serving these members. In interview one, the interviewee discussed how their primary audience was people they serve and their families. This organization felt they had a great opportunity to produce better content for donors as a secondary audience, but they had not had the time to work to do so. Throughout each of these interviews, it was very clear that serving the service recipient and/or members were key, as they were the force that drove the business and revenue. It is helpful to note that in each case, these goals were the overall business goals of the nonprofit.

While serving members and service recipients was key for some organizations, others paid less attention to these audiences and instead focused on donors and volunteers. These organizations had a different model. In interview two, the organization was focused on donors and volunteers. They needed support from these audiences to fuel their work. Their clients were survivors of extreme injustice, and in most cases they did not seek out services on their own. While they had a few resources available on the website, this organization acquired clients through other means. In the case of interview three, the interviewee talked about their need to acquire donors, advocates, and volunteers. They had thousands of volunteers and large donation goals. They knew that donors were increasingly turning to the web to make donations. This organization did not believe they had the resources to effectively serve all of their clients effectively through the website, and they sought to serve them primarily through their individual programs. In the case of both of these organizations, donations and volunteers were key to keeping programs running. They used their websites to ensure they had the resources needed to effectively serve their clients. While clients were acquired through the websites, these organizations used other primary means to get people who need services interested in their programs.

Other organizations took a more balanced approach, seeking to serve both clients and supporters. In the case of interview six, the organization thought of their audience in terms of a typical customer journey for someone receiving their services. This organization sought to serve people considering receiving services, those going through the process of receiving services, as well as those who had completed the process of receiving services. They also considered donors, who they thought of as a subset of those who had already received services, as an important audience. In the case of interview eight, the organization focused heavily on content surrounding their retail stores, the proceeds of which fund this organization’s work. The people who shopped at and donated to these stores were supporters. This organization was also very heavily focused on their organization’s core work, though, and sought to produce quality content for people seeking services. In the case of interview nine, the organization was focused on three audiences: donors, volunteers, and people seeking services. All three audiences were important to this organization and served on their homepage.

What kinds of content do you put on your website? How do you decide what to put up?

Next, interviewees were asked about the kind of content they put up on their websites and how they made content decisions. Organizations took different approaches to deciding what got posted. First, some marketing and communication teams took an active approach to deciding what content went up. They had a clear sitemap and determined what content they needed to put up to support business goals. Other organizations took a similar approach, but, in addition to putting up evergreen information about services, they also put a focused effort on updating a small section of their websites with timely information (news, events, blog articles, etc.) on a very frequent basis. Lastly, some organizations relied on product managers throughout their organization to supply content. When these managers indicated that there had been business changes and/or supply content to be updated, the central staff made the changes.

For organizations that took an active approach to managing their sites, the marketing and communication staff developed and planned the site map and approach to be used for the full website. In interview two, the interviewee said they created a page for each of the different programs they supported, as well as a page for each of their locations. Through these two navigation structures, they were able to have content for each of their programs. For interview three, the interviewee talked about developing an information architecture through their last website redesign. In addition to people coming into their site through navigation, people came by way of search engine results, ads, and more. They tried to keep these alternative entry points in mind and worked to ensure they were optimizing for keywords that would drive traffic. In the case of interview five, the organization worked to create and organize its content around each of its roughly 60 programs. When developing content, they tried to use many photos and worked to develop videos whenever possible. They tried to keep the copy as short as possible. In addition to providing engaging content around their services, they also provided legal content for compliance purposes.

Some other organizations used a similar approach, but they also focused on providing a constant stream of more timely content. In interview six, the organization had an events calendar that they kept up-to-date with events they were hosting, plus events in the community that were of interest to their target audience. They provided opportunities for people to register for these events online. They also worked to keep their blog section updated with frequent article and blog content. In addition, they had static content about all of their available services. In interview nine, the interviewee talked about having many static pages for the programs they offered. In addition, they had a public relations staff of eight at their organization, who operated much like an internal newsroom. This staff worked to develop timely content for their website that would appeal to each audience every week.

Some organizations had a central web staff that took requests for updates, but the content for these updates was sourced from managers in the specific program areas. In interview four, though they had a deep team and focused heavily on their website as an organization, content changes were largely in the hands of internal program managers. The work done by the web team depended on the needs of these managers. In interview seven, the person in the website management role focused more heavily on design and developing new functionality. A content manager typically worked with people outside the organization (volunteers) to write content. This organization was a national association that relied on the submission of content by others. In interview eight, the organization previously had a website manager who developed strategy, but they currently relied primarily on product managers in different parts of the organization to submit content.

Lastly, one person mentioned that they were trying to just get to the basics right now. They had just started in their role as their organization's only marketing/communication staffer, and their role was previously vacant for nine months. They were going through the site page-by-page to make sure dates and other time sensitive information were correct. They believed that most people found information easy to locate, but wanted to have more conversations with others in their organization about the state of the website, particularly about the need to make the site friendlier on mobile devices.

Overall, each of the organizations took a slightly different approach to what they put on their website, but they can be clustered by whether or not they focused on more timely content. Some organizations focused on making sure they had static content on their programs and services. Others had static content, plus more timely content. Some organizations left web content development up to product managers. Lastly, one organization appeared to be catching up from several months of neglect.

Do you have any processes in place to keep the site fresh? Who makes sure it stays up-to-date?

After discussing the kind of content organizations put up on their websites, this question explored how they worked to keep this content up-to-date. For most organizations this was a difficult task. With hundreds or even thousands of pages, culling through content frequently, so as to be able to fix mistakes and provide updated information, presented a major challenge. Some organizations had some success with having meetings and developing calendars for timely content. For program-specific content, one person did mention trying to write timeless content, but it was apparent that was challenging.

For each organization, the challenges were somewhat different. In interview one, the interviewee was the only marketing and communication staff person in their organization, and they were new to the organization. They hoped to get some other people together in their organization to look at how they could ensure content stayed up-to-date long term, but right now this was a challenge. In the fourth interview, the interviewee mentioned that they did not have a clear owner for each piece of content. It could be challenging to know who was responsible for each piece of content. They also worked to provide personalized data to users whenever possible – but this led to more challenges, as this data must be kept up-to-date, as well. In interview five, the interviewee talked about how they had someone who worked part time on their web and graphic design projects. They also had support from a national office and a couple of internal staff members who could make updates. While it appeared this organization was able to make updates as needed, they did not appear to have the time to proactively monitor for outdated content, due to the amount of staff they had. In interview seven, the organization had a marketing director who was the product owner. Other product managers contributed content, but this interviewee mentioned that this had always been the biggest challenge in the 10-15 years they had been working in this area. In interview eight, the interviewee said that they did not have a comprehensive plan for updating content. They went day-by-day. They hoped to have a more comprehensive strategy in place in the future.

Despite the challenges of keeping content up-to-date, a couple of organizations had come up with some ways to manage their blog and other timely content. In interview two, the interviewer mentioned that their organization focused on their homepage, news, blog, and press releases. They had an understanding that the other pages would not be updated constantly and wrote them to be intentionally timeless. In interview six, the organization had a very clear internal guide for publishing weekly blog content. They posted two to three new blog articles a week. They had a couple of service categories and tried to post a story on each service area every week. Each month, they tried to represent the different audience groups within their posts. Outside of the blog, they worked to make updates to site content that program staff submitted within twenty-four hours. For organizations with larger staffs, where more than one person was working on timely content, some organizations found it useful to have a weekly team meeting. In interview three, they had a meeting with external affairs, marketing, web staff, and a writer. They had a list of topics they discussed in each meeting, including a brief content audit and what content they planned to publish. They also discussed statistics and how the site was performing. In interview nine, the team had a large writing staff. They met every Monday morning to discuss who would write content for the week. They also tried to keep content that might need to stay out on the site for a long time as generic as possible, by including phone numbers but not a specific person's email address, for example. This organization had also worked to condense the number of sites it had, making it easier to keep them updated.

Many organizations had trouble keeping their content up-to-date. Of every topic discussed, this was perhaps the one area where there appeared to be the most confusion and challenge. Only one interviewee briefly mentioned conducting content audits. By having clear owners for individual pieces of content, writing content for long-term use, having meetings, and a content calendar, however, certain organizations appeared to have had some success keeping their websites current.

How do you decide when to change the designs or add functionality into your website? Are there features you would like to add?

While keeping websites constantly up-to-date with new content was a major and important challenge, many of the major changes often came through rebranding and rebuilding efforts. Participants were asked about when and how they chose to make major design or functionality changes to their websites and about features they had added to their sites. Many organizations worked with agencies, which they periodically hired to redesign and rebuild their sites. Other organizations, particularly with more resources dedicated to their websites, did this work internally in a more iterative manner.

For those organizations that worked with an agency, many relied on the partner's expertise for keeping the site design fresh. In interview two, the interviewees talked about working with a consultant to redo their eight year old website. They developed a new logo for their organization. After they finished the rebranding, they continued to make frequent small changes on their own over time, largely based on internal opinions. In interview three, the organization had just completed a site redesign in January 2016. They spent a long time analyzing and determining their key audience and primary goals for the project. Now that the project was done, they were continuing to make small refinements internally. They were trying to integrate the site with backend technology so that they could display more data on the website and include data people submitted through the website within their internal business systems. In interview six, the organization did a major redesign within the last year, and they continued to make enhancements, with the help of their vendor, when they had the budget to do so. Unlike some of the other organizations, it appeared they did not have the ability to make these enhancements themselves. They planned to work with their vendor on search engine optimization and on ad integration. In the ninth interview, the organization was fortunate to have had pro-bono help with a redesign a few years ago. They took a look at their analytics when making changes of any kind. In interview five, the organization was part of a national organization. The national parent organization developed a design, and all of the chapters of this organization (with a few exceptions) used this template. The Minnesota chapter appreciated the technical support they received from this national entity.

A handful of organizations did their own redesign work internally. In interview four, the interviewee talked about how they used to redesign their site every two years. This was a massive undertaking. By the end of the project, they would have things that were not working.

Instead, they now made more iterative changes to the site. They were working on a specific tool on their website at the time of the interview. They did A/B testing (trying two different things and testing the results of each) and other forms of testing. They tried to launch changes continually. In interview seven, they just went through a redesign and moved to a new system. They built and made continual changes based on business needs. They had a web developer on staff and were able to make changes and do large-scale redesigns on an as-needed basis. In interview eight, the organization made changes internally as needed. They believed design changes should be made every one to two years or at least every three years. Most recently, they thought they needed to move to a mobile-friendly layout.

Overall, organizations felt the need to keep their sites modern, respond to business needs, and ensure their organizations remain relevant. Many enlisted the help of third party agencies to help with this work every one to eight years. For others, who had more internal development resources, they did this work themselves. Instead of waiting for a few years to make changes, their changes were often much more iterative and responsive to the needs of the business and design trends. They tended not to launch changes all at once as much. For organizations that worked with a consultant, many would make some smaller changes between redesigns internally. A few organizations did not have the internal capacity to do redesign work themselves.

How do you measure success?

Next, organizations were asked how they measure success. For each organization, success was measured differently. A couple of organizations had very developed metrics they used to determine how well their sites were performing. For other organizations, measurement was a simple practice of listening to feedback from users and internal stakeholders.

For the organizations with the most advanced metrics, data had an influence on all decisions they made. They worked to evaluate if people were taking action on their site and completing key actions in support of their organization's goals. In interview three, they looked at the number of people who were volunteering, donating, etc. They also analyzed site engagement, and whether certain parts of the site were more popular than others. They did not consider page views to be engagement, as they wanted people to be finding information quickly. They also considered whether programs were hearing from people who received information online. Some programs were not looking for more clients, so the goals could be very specific to the needs of different programs. In interview nine, the organization used Google Analytics extensively to review what people were looking at on their site. They did an analytics audit twice each year and conducted a review any time they were planning a major change. Among the items they looked at were page views, users, sessions, pages viewed per session, and bounce rate (how quickly people left the site). In interview four, the web group drove nearly all of their decision making by the use of analytics. Every time they had a new project, they analyzed what the key problem was and then determined how to collect data and measure their success. They defined key performance indicators for each goal, and reviewed how the site was performing against each goal after launch. They also had three overall key performance indicators for the website as a whole and reviewed these metrics frequently.

For other organizations, the analytics process was less developed. In interview one, the interviewee was new to the organization and had just begun accessing Google Analytics data two weeks previously. They wanted to figure out if the people in their target audience were using their website. In interview two, the organization looked at some basic data to determine how many people were visiting pages on the website. In interview six, in addition to measuring site visits, they also measured event registrations and listened to positive feedback. In interview eight, they had used analytics to measure success more clearly. At the time of the interview, however, they were less focused on analytics, due to staff capacity. They did, however, measure open and click rates.

For some organizations, measurement was simply anecdotal. In interview five, they mentioned that they did look at click counts, but mostly made changes based on the feedback they received. In interview seven, they were not concerned so much with the business success of the project as they were on whether or not what they built was better than the previous solution and was a good use of the organization's resources in terms of the value it added.

Most organizations used some data to look at how their websites were performing. The amount of data collection and the importance it was given varied substantially from organization to organization. For a couple of organizations, looking at how the website was performing and the kind of results it yielded for business was critical. For other organizations, measurement was conducted around site traffic. For yet other organizations, measurement was seldom done. With organizations that had more extensive websites, measurement tended to take place, and it typically aligned with business goals.

What do the best nonprofit websites look like?

Lastly, interviewees were asked to reflect on what the best nonprofit websites look like. Participants provided a variety of responses, but there was some similarity between them. Most respondents suggested that nonprofit websites should inspire people, reflect the organization's mission, and allow them to take actions. A number of people also commented on the power of using stories, compelling photos, and video to showcase organizations and encourage people to learn more. The Charity Water website was specifically mentioned by multiple people as an example of a website that did a particularly good job of doing effective digital storytelling.

For many organizations, encouraging people to take action on the website was a key goal. In interview two, the interviewee talked about giving people the information they needed to take action and not overcrowding it with information that would confuse them.

By and large, more people commented about the value of using stories than anything else. In interview one, the interviewee said the most important thing for nonprofits to do is to inspire people to believe in their cause and invite the visitor in. In interview four, the person said they looked at other websites whenever they were working on a project to learn what others were doing. In interview seven, the interviewee mentioned how it was not always clear what an organization does. Stories were incredibly important for creating an emotional connection, as were unique photos that showcased the work the organization does. In interview eight, the interviewee discussed how their organization received grants and how staff could talk about their programs in a complex manner. On their website, they tried to talk about things as simply as they could to make their organization approachable and understandable.

Consultant

In addition to interviewing nonprofit marketing professionals, the former CEO of a web-consulting agency also provided insights on the role of agency professionals. Questions posed to this professional were quite similar to the questions posed of in-house professionals. The questions were changed somewhat to give this professional an opportunity to talk about how consultants facilitated conversations for other companies, which was experience that a professional working within an organization might not have.

How do you help clients think through who their key audiences should be for their websites? What audiences do many organizations try to reach? Do organizations need help in reaching the correct audiences?

First, this consultant was asked how he helped clients think through who the target audiences should be for a project. The consultant said that most organizations tended to have an idea of who their key audiences were. When he first started working with organizations, many were working to create their first website. Now, most organizations had created several iterations of their website and determined what audiences were most important through this process. When organizations do not know what their audiences were, a consultant could ask questions to help them figure it out. This consultant indicated that he worked much like a consultant in any industry and brought three primary mechanisms to the table to solve problems.

First, he brought in staff with a great deal of relevant experience. Second, he supplied a process for completing the work. This process could include ways to structure questions and information. By having a process, he could guide the client through the process. Third, the consultant convened a group of stakeholders from the organization, who ultimately provided much of the key information about the business. While the consultant was present to ask questions and organize information, the people that worked within the organization provided much of the necessary information.

How do you help organizations decide on what to put up on their websites – what kinds of content to put on their website?

Next, the consultant was asked how he helped organizations figure out what kind of content to put on their websites. Typically, he said that this process began by developing a spreadsheet inventory of all content on the current website and linking it to analytics data.

Through this process, he could see what content existed, how much traffic it received and more. He looked at who maintained the content internally and which external audiences need the content. Often, this process identified content that could be removed from the site, as well as additional content that needed to be added to the site. Once an initial draft of content was created, the consultant worked with the client to determine how the site would be governed and how they would handle new content, so the content remained fresh and relevant after the consultant left.

How do you advise organizations on when to make changes to their site design or add significant functionality into their websites? How do you help them build appropriate plans?

Beyond content, the consultant was asked to comment on when organizations should consider taking on a major redesign effort. He said that this process should take place whenever large organizational changes took place. Essentially, the website should change when the business changed. For organizations with well thought out websites that were built in extendable platforms, this process should be easy. For some systems with poor architecture, it could be hard to change the site for new needs and technologies, like mobile phones (which require scalable design). A professional could help organizations think about how they could future-proof their site and make it work with other systems they might utilize.

How do you advise clients on technology that will best support their goals? Why Drupal? How do you develop toolsets that will benefit many organizations?

Looking more specifically at the technology, this consultant chose to work with Drupal for most projects. He supported clients with complex needs and found that this tool served their needs effectively. That said, the consultant indicated that there were many strong platforms available to serve an organization's needs. The most important factors for the non-profit to evaluate when a vendor suggested a specific tool included whether or not there was a community behind the tool, how easy it was to understand, accessibility, and the availability of support. The consultant's skills in implementing and supporting the tool were more important than the specific tool chosen. Given the importance of choosing a skilled partner that could help when changes were needed, organizations should work to first choose the right partner and then listen to their recommendations around technology, assuming they sounded rational and would fit the needs of the project.

What do the best nonprofit websites look like?

Once the consultant started working with an organization, he attempted to develop the best possible site. He said that the best sites were not trendy and should not look like a fad. The website should provide a sense of the organization's philosophy, what they did, how to get involved, donate, and do other important tasks. The best designs did not stand out – they were the ones not noticed. The best designs looked good, but the secret was for them to not be noticeable.

How can organizations get the most out of working with an agency partner?

To get the most out of working with an agency partner, this consultant recommended that clients should be willing to put in the time to provide the agency with information about the organization needed to move the project forward. The consultant said that the best clients would get extra time from the consultant, which would benefit the project. The project was not done when the consultant was hired – in fact, it was just beginning. At the end of the day, the right consultant could help the client realize their goals and create a great website to meet their needs.

Discussion

Interviewing several nonprofit professionals and a web communication professional provided context on how many organizations produced their websites and on how outside consultants worked to support these needs. In general, all of the interview findings indicated that business goals and priorities helped shape what an organization did on their website. Within the interviews, greater insight was gathered on how organizations made decisions related to their websites.

Audience

When asked about the audience they sought to reach on the web, organizations gave different answers, though most focused on donors and people seeking service. Some sought to reach people seeking service. For one organization, their primary goal was to sign up new members and retain their existing membership base. One organization mentioned that only four percent of their revenue came from donations, so ensuring people knew about their services and could sign up was critical. For many organizations, their key business goals surrounded getting people to take advantage of their services. Thus, they needed to promote these services online. Other organizations focused more on supporting their donor base. One organization served survivors of injustice. The people served did not pay directly for their services. Therefore, establishing a revenue source from supportive donors was critical and must be reflected on the website. For many organizations, supporting both the needs of donors and people seeking service was important. One organization mapped out the typical customer journey for someone seeking the services they offer. They found that they needed to have content available for those seeking service, those currently receiving service, as well as those who had already received service. Many of those who had already received service became donors.

Content

From a content perspective, all of the organizations worked to make sure the material they put online met the needs of their business. Organizations' online departments took different roles in producing this content, however. Some departments simply thought about how to put content up in a digital form and relied on program managers and others to produce this content. Other departments took a more proactive approach, producing sitemaps, determining what the structure of the site should look like, and doing more writing and editing of content. For the organizations that created a site structure, many referenced working with a consultant to determine how the site structure could best meet the needs of the organization's customers. They also thought about web-centric best practices, like optimizing content for search engines. Many organizations mentioned that much of their content stayed the same for a long period of time, but some of the organizations that put a focus on creating timely content for the user focused on a blog and/or events section. Ultimately, much of this work depended on how the web group was staffed and what it was tasked with doing. Some organizations took content update requests, and others took a more active role in producing content and creating clear structural guidelines for the organization.

Keeping Sites Updated

When asked about how they kept their content updated, many interviewees sighed. For many organizations, this was a significant challenge, as organizations amass hundreds or thousands of pages. Some organizations mentioned determining an owner for each section or page, and making sure that content was reviewed periodically. Some organizations wrote content to be intentionally generic, in an attempt to make frequent updates less necessary. Some organizations also put the content they were updating frequently into a few sections, such as a news or blog area, so they could make sure these parts of the site were always fresh. Creating clarity around content ownership and when different sections must be updated seemed to help organizations keep content more up-to-date. This was the biggest area of challenge for many organizations.

Design and Technology

Beyond updating the content and structure of websites, organizations also must work to keep their design and technology updated. Many organizations worked with a consultant when they needed to make major design changes. Most could do some design and technical work internally, and some did all of this work themselves. That said, most organizations hired an agency partner every few years to do a large site refresh. For at least some organizations, budget appeared to be a factor in when they did this kind of work. A couple of organizations mentioned that they looked at analytics or did testing before making large changes. For those that did design work themselves, they had at least one staff member with significant technical expertise. They also tended to make constant iterative changes, as opposed to conducting large whole-site refreshes every few years, which was more common among those that worked with a consultant. One organization that did design work internally was currently redoing their group fitness tool. Once they finished this mini-redo, they planned to move to the next project. It appeared that staff resources and capabilities, as well as the ability to hire consultant help, were often determining factors in how frequently large changes could be made.

Measuring Results

Interviewees used analytics to guide their work in varying ways. Some did advanced analytics analysis, but most did not. Some organizations did bi-annual data collection work and looked at specific metrics. When organizations can use analytics to support specific efforts, like justifying the need to redo the site, or for monitoring general performance with key performance indicators, it can be beneficial to their websites.

The Best Sites

Overall, the interviewees were passionate, had thoughtful answers, and worked to make their websites better for people who used their organizations' services. When asked what the best nonprofit websites looked like, respondents suggested they should inspire people, reflect the organization's mission and allow them to take actions. A number of people also commented on the power of using stories, compelling photos, and video to showcase organizations and encourage people to learn more. The Charity Water website was specifically mentioned by multiple people as an example of a website that did a particularly good job of using vivid and impactful stories, imagery, and video. Overall, this response supported the overall finding that an organization's website should be a strategic business tool and support the organization's key audiences and mission.

How Consultants Work

The consultant provided some additional background on how consultants worked with organizations to produce a top-quality experience. First, he said that consultants brought in staff with a great deal of relevant experience. Second, they brought in a process for completing the work. This could include ways to structure questions and information. By having a process, they could guide the client through the steps they need to take to create an effective finished product. It was important to understand that the client held much of the information the consultant needed about the business, but that the consultant could add significant value by bringing in process expertise, additional capacity, and specific skills needed to execute the project.

Consultant Best Practices

For working with content, this consultant had a process approach to bring forward – in much the same way he worked to come up with a process for other parts of the project. Typically, he said that this process began by developing a spreadsheet inventory of all content on the current website and linking it to analytics data. Through this process, he could see what content existed, how much traffic it received, and more.

This consultant believed that there was not necessarily a specific time after which an organization should take on a redesign, but that an organization needed to change its site when the business was changing. Overall, the consultant recommended that the website should reflect the business.

Interestingly, this consultant believed that many different technology tools could serve an organization's needs. Getting a consultant that could help and understand the client was of critical importance, though. For those that did this work internally, it appeared that having a skilled technical staff member was of importance to this work being done in an effective way.

When asked what a good nonprofit website looks like, this consultant suggested that it was important to get a sense of the organization's philosophy, what they did, how to get involved, donate, and do other important tasks. He said the best designs did not stand out. The best designs looked good, but the secret was for them to not be noticeable. To create this kind of experience, he emphasized that the client needed to be available and do the assignments the agency partner gave them in order to develop a site that best matched their needs.

Findings

How do nonprofits in Minnesota use their website to connect with donors, volunteers, and people seeking services?

With hundreds of nonprofit organizations across the state, organizations have different goals, seek to reach different audiences, and build different sets of content to support these needs. The research found, however, that for the organizations interviewed and the sites analyzed, nearly all organizations were interested in serving donors, volunteers, and people seeking services in some fashion, and that these were, in general, the most important audiences. In nearly all cases, organizations used their websites to connect with the audiences that were most important to achieving their most important service objectives.

The content analysis concluded that donors were regarded as the primary audience for many sites (40%). People accessing services was a slightly more common target at 45% of sites. For 15% of sites, there was no clearly targeted audience – the organization simply provided information or news about what the organization did on the homepage.

For nearly all sites, offering the ability to donate with a credit card was deemed important – 90% of sites offered this ability. On many sites, this was the only piece of functionality that allowed users to complete an action online (the rest of the site was static information that required the visitor to call or email if they wanted to take action). Clearly, credit card donation capability was a priority for organizations, even though there might be some complexity to setting up e-commerce tools for smaller organizations. Over half of the sites offered an address where donors could mail in a gift, and about a quarter of sites offered other giving options, like in-kind and stock donation options. Larger organizations were much more likely to offer stock giving options.

Of these three key audiences (donors, people receiving service, and volunteers), volunteers were perhaps the audience that received the least focus. Just over a third of sites had specific volunteer opportunities posted on them.

Most sites reviewed in the content analysis had some form of service information on them – about 90%. Not all sites had information about how to access services. While about 75% of sites had contact information, only 12.5% offered a way to sign up directly online. While most sites had information about the services the organization provided, not all made it easy to sign up for services online. Some organizations provided services in a different country from where they were operating and fundraising. For these services, people in the organization's home country might not be able to sign up for service, which is why this information might not be provided.

From talking with nonprofit organization web marketing staff, it was apparent that different organizations had different goals, just as the content analysis revealed. These interviews helped explain why some of the trends existed and how organizations directed their online marketing towards supporting their overall business goals. For most organizations, these goals were developed in tandem with financial goals. If there were a strong financial need or incentive for a certain initiative, organizations likely prioritized that need or incentive.

Some organizations' financial opportunities revolved around providing services, and thus the website was very focused on selling services. For one organization, acquiring and retaining members was their key focus. They looked at the revenue that each service brought in and focused their website on the most profitable services. This organization made it easy for people to sign up for a membership online, and the actions people could take online were much more extensive than other organizations. Another organization worked to produce conferences and materials for members. All of their revenue came from these ventures, so these items were very important to their success. For one organization, only four percent of revenue came from donations. As such, they were more focused on service-based initiatives than seeking donations.

Some organizations received most of their funding through donations and were very focused on donors online. One organization served abuse survivors. They needed donations to support this work. Most people who needed this help were so impaired by abuse that they did not look for help. The organization must seek these people out. As such, getting donations and support was the main goal of the website. Another organization discussed how they had thousands of volunteers and a large donation goal. Without this support, they would not be able to operate in the same way, so acquiring this support was key.

Some organizations took a more balanced approach. One organization thought about the customer journey of someone who was thinking about if they might need service. A prospective service recipient often began thinking about the idea of signing up for service years before they actually signed up, as they sought more information about the process. Next, it would often take a couple of years to complete the process. Once someone completed the process, they were likely to want to stay involved in the community and might wish to support the cause as a donor. At each stage, the organization tried to provide information that would be relevant to the audience. This organization needed both people to inquire about service and people to support the work financially. Another organization operated an extensive network of retail stores to support its work. They needed to provide extensive information about this retail store network to people who wanted to visit, while also needing to provide information about their services to clients.

Most organizations had owned a website for some time and had a clear focus they could follow for future iterations. Some organizations, especially those that had a change in their business strategy and those that were overhauling an outdated website, realized that the focus of their presence might need to change. If they were a newer organization, they could enlist the help of a consultant. A consultant could ask questions to help determine the most important business objectives and determine who the most important audiences were.

In the end, most organization's websites were a reflection of their business and financial goals. If the organization's most important external need was the acquisition of donors, the website was focused on creating a good experience for donors. If the organization needed to obtain members and these members supported most of its work, the website tended to be more focused on donors. For nearly all organizations, the ability to accept donations online was prioritized. Only about 75% of sites had service contact information. While acquiring new clients directly was less important for organizations who received their clients via referrals or other venues, the fact that this study found one in four organizations not having direct contact information to sign up for service indicated there may be an opportunity for organizations to consider adding this basic information. Depending on their business and how organizations were structured, acquiring clients, donors, and/or volunteers online might be a key objective. For others, this kind of recruitment was not needed.

What are the key elements of a robust website for Minnesota nonprofits? What kinds of content, design, and functionality are needed to produce a best-in-class experience? How advanced is the functionality found on Minnesota nonprofit's websites?

While all of the organizations surveyed had a website, the functionality found on these sites varied dramatically, as did the ways organizations thought about building out new content and functionality. There was a set of elements found on all reputable organization websites – namely information about what the organization did, a consistent design, navigation, and a cohesive strategy that tied it all together. Some larger organizations featured news, events, and frequent blog posts on their website. For organizations that wanted to put more focus on their website and see a larger return, this was the next step. There were a few features that were not commonly found, such as peer-to-peer discussion boards.

Nearly all sites featured a few staple items – items that might be considered the "basics" of a web presence. All organizations' websites should have these features. First, all of the sites had at least a few pages with static content that described what the organization did. This study also addressed written text quality and found the writing on most sites to be average. While the quality of the designs on sites varied, nearly all sites had a consistent design that was present on all pages throughout the site. Over 95% of sites had helpful navigation and had the same template in use throughout the site. Lastly, nearly all sites were free of major technical errors. More than 90% of sites' functional working order was rated as "very well" or "moderately well." While very few sites were rated as "extremely well," most sites had good navigation. About three-quarters (72.5%) of sites had links to social media channels on them, where the organization could showcase current examples of its work. When the contemporary design of the sites was rated on a scale of one to five (with five being very contemporary and one being not contemporary), nearly all sites (more than 95%) received a two, three, or four, with almost equal distributions. The interview with the consultant indicated that while nonprofits did not need to always have cutting-edge designs, they needed to have a design that reflects well on their organization and did not distract the visitor.

Many of the features needed for a successful website revolved around having a cohesive strategy. Many marketing tactics, such as brochures, posters, and even public presentations can be presented by themselves, without regard for the organization's other marketing materials. By contrast, a website needs cohesive and consistent templates, navigation and content. Because of the need for cohesiveness, organizations must do planning and ongoing maintenance to ensure a unified structure. Many organizations developed a central site map for all locations and programs and figured out how the user would interact with each of these paths when redeveloping a site. Different organizations did different levels of centralized management on an ongoing basis. While most organizations did most of the updating from a centralized team, some relied on business staff to provide information about the products and services offered, with central staff primarily focused on posting material. For organizations that applied less central strategy to web publishing, content was sourced from multiple individuals and might be less consistent. Organizations with the most robust presences made an effort to centrally manage the web content process, making decisions for what should go up on their website by thinking first about the needs of end users coming to the site.

Once an organization set up a website with a clear strategy, it needed to be maintained. The consultant discussed the importance of making changes to the website as the organization's business changed. Since the site should reflect the business, when the business changed, the organization had to determine what changes needed to be made online. The best sites were architected taking the possibility of future changes into account, so it was relatively easy to make changes as businesses changed.

Some organizations achieved a more advanced level with websites featuring more news and current information. Larger organizations, defined as those with annual revenue over $20 million, were much more likely to have a website that fits in this category. Many of these organizations had a news section – 62.5% of organizations with an annual income over $20 million had a news section. (Just 32% of organizations of all sizes had a news section.) In addition, just 25% of organizations had a blog. Only 32% of sites had search functionality. Again, this functionality was much more prevalent on the sites of larger organizations, where 75% of organizations with annual revenue over $20 million had search functionality. It appeared these organizations were able to invest in news and content production and needed search functionality to help people navigate through the large mass of content found on their sites.

Some organizations spent a great deal of time generating blog and timely event content for their sites. Having a constant stream of timely content could be helpful for people that were making a decision about obtaining services over a longer period of time or when they were considering higher involvement purchases. For organizations that received a great deal of donations, stories also showed how an organization was relevant and what work they were currently doing to make a difference in the community. Organizations that offered this kind of timely content, typically only focused on updating a small section of the site frequently – such as a blog, news section or events section. It appeared that organizations needed to make a larger investment of time in their website in order to be able to consistently provide this kind of frequent news and information.

There were a few features reviewed in this study that were not common on any websites. Just 5% of sites had forums or discussion boards for members and people in the community. Most sites offered an opportunity for people to consume static information, but few opportunities to interact with others as a part of a community. For sites that did allow people to take action, most of the action was directed back at the organization – with the ability to take action by submitting contact forms or making a donation.

To produce a quality web experience, companies and organizations typically relied on content management software to power their site. The consultant suggested that many tools could support a website effectively – there was not just one tool that could produce a high quality experience. This consultant suggested that the most important things to consider in a technology were whether or not there is a community behind the tool, how easy it was to understand, how accessible it was, and the availability of support. For many organizations with little understanding of the full gamut of tools available, finding a reputable and trustworthy partner to help make a decision on tools would be advisable.

Applying the eMICA (Extended Model of Internet Commerce Adoption) scale, this study's research indicates that organizations must be able to handle promotion activities readily – namely they must have good current information about programs and services available online. In many cases, organizations could benefit from providing some opportunities for interaction (as described in the provision stage) through forms. Many organizations expanded their presence through the creation of additional content (such as new or blog articles), as opposed to spending significant time on developing very advanced functionality that enabled people to complete their customer journey online. The eMICA scale was developed with e-commerce websites in mind (Ting, 2013, p. 284). For many of the nonprofit organizations studied, websites appeared to encourage people to take part in an offline experience, as opposed to encouraging people to exclusively receive service online. At the same time, many organizations' primary business activities were produced in offline locations, and websites were an extension of the business – operating in ways that supported and augmented the organization's primary mission.

In summary, there were a few core elements that nearly all nonprofits had on their websites: good, relevant up-to-date information, good navigation, consistent design, and no errors. Many organizations linked to social media pages and had good clean page copy that made it easy for people to find out more about how they can get involved with an organization. Larger organizations had more of a need for blogs, search, and other functionality needed to navigate large sites.

How do organizations invest time and effort into their websites?

Organizations that participated in this study invested varying amounts of time and money into the creation of their websites. While it was very difficult to get figures on the exact amounts of money spent with consultants or exact amounts of time spent on projects, it was very possible to determine what processes organizations used to keep their sites updated, the kinds of vendors they worked with, and the kinds of quality standards they applied to their work. Much of the work associated with websites involved ongoing maintenance, but organizations also undertook large redesigns periodically.

Each organization was asked about how they worked to keep their site updated on an ongoing basis. For nearly all organizations, this ongoing work was a major challenge, if not the largest challenge they faced in managing their website. Many organizations had trouble culling through content and looking for outdated items with any frequency, and some organizations lacked clear owners for individual pieces of content. For many nonprofits, having clear owners for individual sections, as well as processes for review, was helpful. Many organizations did comprehensive re-makes of large sections or whole websites every few years.

Some organizations had success in managing their blog, news section, or other timely content in a more systematic way. One organization had a clear formula for their blog. They posted three new articles each week, each around specific content areas. Another organization had a weekly team meeting with staff from the web group, as well as other parts of the organization, where they discussed the stories they plan to publish in the upcoming week. Another organization had a similar process.

After some time, organizations made larger changes to their content. This was most commonly done when a major site redesign effort took place. Often, these heavily planned projects involved diving into the content, organization, and technology all at the same time. Once the structure was set, organizations often simply needed to keep this existing structure updated with new content.

Beyond content, organizations worked to update designs and technical functionality in order to keep sites fresh and relevant. For many organizations, this meant working with an external partner that had more experience in this space. These consultants helped them assess goals and suggested solutions to meet their needs. Often, this work was done every few years, as new technologies appeared, designs became outdated, or as organizations needed substantial changes. Once a major overhaul was completed, organizations often worked to make smaller refinements over time. While this work can be a serious commitment for organizations to undertake, the Heuristic Systematic Model and the Elaboration Likelihood Model both indicate that when someone is making a decision in an area they are less invested in or familiar with, they may be more likely to respond to superficial factors like design, endorsement or applicability to make a decision, without engaging as closely with the content (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981, p. 262 & 1987, p. 41-42; Chaiken, 1987, pp. 4, 6). Thus, especially when people are less connected with the action they are taking, the design and visual functionality found on the website may be a factor as they are making decision about whether or not to get more information about a product or service.

While working with a third-party vendor could ease the stress for internal teams, the consultant stated that it was important for organizations to be directly involved in the project. Consultants often lack information about the specific value organizations bring to the marketplace and need help understanding the nuances of their work. Organizations that take the time to explain their work and take assignments well often could get extra attention from the consultant, which could benefit their project.

Some organizations did their own design and technology work internally. Instead of doing large redesigns all at once, they updated them over time, focusing on smaller sections at a time. Organizations that took this approach often had a staff with more technical expertise. This approach could work for organizations, particularly larger organizations and nonprofits with more advanced technical needs. One person mentioned that their nonprofit's business was technical in nature; so showing their audience that they have up-to-date technology was critical for their organization's brand. Most organizations without more complex or substantial needs opted to work with an external vendor for these needs. For organizations with substantial ongoing needs, having a dedicated web developer on staff was beneficial.

Once organizations made a large investment in their websites through either a vendor or in-house arrangement, it was important to continue to maintain them. Maintenance was often the most challenging component for organizations. Because websites must be cohesive entities, where content in each section works together, they often re-did them all at once. Some organizations with more technical staff were able to make larger modifications to their sites in smaller chunks over time. Regardless of the approach, organizations needed to invest time in maintaining their sites with fresh content and on large projects that made large changes to navigation and design as the business and technology changed.

What is the purpose of Minnesota nonprofits' websites and how do organizations measure their success?

Minnesota nonprofits have very different goals, serve very different kinds of people, and come in all different shapes and sizes. That said, many of them serve similar audiences and used similar tactics to measure their work.

Ultimately, nonprofit websites must serve their key constituents (which are most often people receiving service and donors/funders) with the information they need. When thinking about what the best nonprofit websites look like, nonprofit marketers stated that sites should inspire people, reflect the organization's mission, and allow them to take actions. Several people commented about sites not needing to have flashy graphics, but that they needed to let people take actions and learn about the organization. A number of organizations mentioned the Charity Water website as being a great example of a website that uses stories – many organizations tried to emulate this, though on a much smaller scale. Given the importance of donors to many organizations, impactful stories that show the work the organization does could be a particularly important feature.

Organizations often worked on building the base of their website or doing a major redesign at one time. They typically developed a structure for their site at this time. Throughout this process, it was important to think critically about the most important audiences, what information people needed, and how they could best organize this information. One organization that had just recently finished a redesign was very certain of the top things they wanted to accomplish with their website. Another organization interviewed made smaller changes more often, but they had still taken time to determine what the most important aspects of their site was. In essence, each organization defined their site's purpose when they put together a strategy, which was often done during a redesign project. It should be noted that not everyone interviewed readily mentioned their site's goals. Some organizations, especially those of smaller organizations and those with older sites, appeared to have given less thought to their overall goals and strategy.

In terms of measuring the results of work, organizations were at different places. Some organizations did extensive measurement for every project they complete, while most did more rudimentary measurement work. One organization had key performance indicator metrics for its website, as well as for individual projects. They monitored these figures closely and also looked at metrics to determine what pages people engaged with. Each time they started a project, they figured out what the key problem was and then determined how they could track improvements. For a website where people took action online, such as donating, signing up for an event, or signing up for a membership, these factors provided a great deal of information on how a website was performing. While the data could take time to gather, it could be used to show management how increased time spent on the website led to more positive business.

For organizations less focused on having people perform specific actions online, where the site served as more of an informational tool or where staff had less familiarity with analytics platforms, less focus was placed on analytics. Many organizations looked at simple figures, like what pages were most commonly visited, whether people were dropping off the site, and whether people were not finding certain important sections. A number of organizations also mentioned taking comments and feedback from their constituents into consideration. For most organizations, looking at analytics reports to determine where they needed to do maintenance and for showing the management team about the value of this work was enough. Some organizations did not look at their analytics reports at all.

In summary, organization websites existed not to have flashy graphics, but to share impactful stories and inspire people, reflect the organization's mission, and allow people to take actions. Organizations spent different amounts of time tracking the results of their work. When trying to convince management of the need for more resources, or for commerce-driven sites, key performance indicators were helpful.

Limitations & Future Research

This research provided a general overview of the state of nonprofit websites in the state of Minnesota, and how they were managed. While it represents information that had not previously been gathered specific to organizations in Minnesota, there were limitations to this work.

The scope of this study was limited. This research looked at three key audiences – donors, volunteers and service recipients. While these were among the most common audiences to nonprofit websites, it ignored other audiences, like advocates and employees. Also, this study was not inclusive of all sites. A heavy focus was placed on social and human service websites. While a large subset was selected from the Minnesota Council of Nonprofit's website, in a somewhat random fashion, it was not inclusive of all of the thousands of Minnesota nonprofit sites and could have missed important information found in these sites. Because these results were limited to only a subset of websites, these results were only generalizable among nonprofits websites visited, and data cannot be reliably generalized over all nonprofits in Minnesota. In addition, this content audit was coded by a single coder (the author of the research). Ideally, an additional coder would have participated in the process to help ensure accurate data.

A new study could include more nonprofit organizations, using a true random sample, to make the results generalizable over a defined grouping of organizations. A future study could also investigate for-profit companies and/or government entities – especially as many non-profits compete directly with these entities. Additional methodologies could be used to gather more information. Focus groups or additional in-person interviews could gather information about why organizations make the decisions they do or perhaps interview likely visitors of nonprofit websites.

It is also important to note that while this research focused primarily on websites, websites are just one tool falling under an organization's digital marketing strategy. Social media (both paid and organic), search engine optimization, search engine marketing, and email marketing are others such tools and tactics that fall under this digital marketing umbrella, and may link viewers to content on an organization's website, thus driving traffic. This study did not carefully consider how websites fall under an organization's overall digital marketing strategy or even how it fits under an organization's overall marketing strategy. Future research could consider whether organizations are spending the same kind of strategic effort on print materials as they do on their websites, whether they use similar processes, and whether they are maintained in similar ways.

While there are limitations to this research, this study began to collect concrete information on the state of nonprofit websites in Minnesota. This work provides data on a subset of Minnesota nonprofits' websites and features methodologies that could be utilized for future website studies.

Recommendations

Through reviewing dozens of websites and talking to nonprofit professionals that create websites, this study was able to develop a thorough understanding of the management of many organizations' websites. Through the review of common practices, as well as suggestions from professionals that develop sites, there are several areas where nonprofits will likely want to make sure they focus. Given that website redevelopment projects, as well as ongoing maintenance, can be time consuming and expensive, it makes sense for organizations to focus their efforts in places that will likely yield the best return on investment. Based on the results of this research, the following recommendations on the audiences, functionality, and investment are made.

Define Audience and Purpose

Above all else, organizations must remember that they exist to serve a group of people with services and that many do not exist without their supporters. Several people interviewed commented on how the most important aspect of such a website is to show the impactful work an organization does. Organizations do not need to join every design fad or utilize the most complex platform. While they must be easy to use and navigate, organizations should focus on using their sites to allow people to learn more about the good work they do and give them opportunities to take action.

Websites do not need to try to be all things to all people. Of the sites studied in the content analysis, donors were regarded as the primary audience for 40% of sites and people accessing services were the primary audience for 45% of sites. While it is important to meet the needs of numerous constituencies, for most sites, donors and people accessing services ultimately come out on top when looking at where to provide information. Organizations should review their overall marketing goals when determining how to position their website, but remember that most sites primarily target supporters and people accessing services. Organizations should make sure the needs of these two groups are met and that information for them is quickly accessible from the homepage.

When looking at how a potential donor can take action on the site, nearly every site made it very easy for someone to make a credit card gift online. In fact, 90% of sites reviewed had this functionality. While there are perhaps some technical and procedural logistics required to get online donations set up for some smaller organizations, it is important to note that this is key functionality that nearly all organizations offered. Organizations should ensure their online credit card giving functionality is easy to use and makes the donor feel good about their contribution. Over half of the sites offered an address where donors could mail a gift, and about a quarter of sites offered other giving options, like in-kind and stock donation options. Larger organizations were much more likely to offer stock giving options. While these giving options may be less traditional than small credit card transactions, they present a great opportunity for organizations to realize larger gifts, which someone may not be able to make outright immediately in cash. Organizations should consider putting short statements on how people can make in-kind, stock and planned gifts. Even if they are not able to produce extensive materials and features demonstrating the impact these gifts can make, they should be able to put up some information about how someone who is interested in making such a gift can get started. Providing basic information about these gift types may, in fact, be more extensive than what other competing organizations offer.

In addition to serving donors, most sites made it possible for people who want service to get involved or learn more. The content analysis found that roughly 90% of sites had some form of service information on them. While most sites described the services they provided, fewer provided information on how to get started or who to contact to learn more. About 75% of sites had contact information available. A full quarter of sites did not have a clear contact available for people to reach out to with questions or to sign up. When looking at giving people an opportunity to sign up for service, only 12.5% offered a place where people could take action online. Organizations should certainly work to provide illustrations of the service they provide, but also think about steps someone would need to take to get service. All organizations should identify someone people can contact with questions and provide their contact information. By not having contact information available, people who need service may have trouble contacting them. Organizations should also consider developing forms that people can fill out to sign up for service. Only 12.5% of organizations surveyed in the content analysis had these online forms available. Forms provide a simple way for people to inquire about service – they lower the barrier someone must take to learn more. As such, organizations that want to obtain more client leads should consider prioritizing their development to standout against the many organizations that do not offer these.

In addition to proving the right content, a thorough understanding of the audience will help ensure it is provided in the best possible manner. The Elaboration Likelihood Model and Heuristic Systematic Model discuss how some people process information by looking primarily at visual cues, who the message is coming from, and other systematic influences, as opposed to carefully analyzing the message. People who have more knowledge or involvement in the information may read the content more carefully (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981, p. 262 & 1987, p. 41-42; Chaiken, 1987, pp. 4, 6). In addition, the Low Involvement Model explains how people have varying degrees of involvement in decisions and that they need simpler information when making decisions they are less closely involved with (Krugman, 1965, p. 355). Understanding the audience and their decision-making journey can facilitate providing the right information in the right format.

Provide Organized, Engaging and Error-Free Static Content

Once an organization has identified the audiences it plans to serve on the web, it should consider what kind of content, design and technology it needs to deliver in order to provide a good experience for visitors. Through the content analysis, it was discovered that there were several features that most sites have. This provides somewhat of a blueprint for where other organizations will likely want to focus.

First, perhaps unsurprisingly, more than 90% of sites had static content about their services that appeared to be relatively error free. For most sites, content was well organized, pages utilized the same design template/navigation structure, and there were few if any errors found on pages. Being clearly organized, visually engaging, and easy to navigate is critical for being relevant to the visitor. The content analysis found that almost 75% of sites had links to their social media profiles on their website. This figure, however, did indicate that a quarter of sites did not feature links. For organizations that have a social media presence that is frequently updated, linking to or embedding these resources may be an easy way to keep interested constituents updated on the work of the organization. Many larger organizations in this study had a news section and/or a blog. For organizations that have the ability to develop content on an ongoing basis, these tools provide an additional way to constantly provide information for the target audience.

When nonprofit professionals were asked about what makes the best nonprofit website, many talked about the importance of engaging content to evoke emotion and encourage action.

Many professionals stated that having this kind of quality content and showcasing the organization's mission is exceedingly important – much more important than having the latest functionality. Organizations should work to prioritize the addition of high quality content and focus on creating content (be it text, photos, or video) that deeply engages constituents in their mission. In a world where many people process information using the peripheral processing model described in the Elaboration Likelihood Model, visitors do not necessarily spending vast amounts of time carefully reading content (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981, p. 262 & 1987, p. 41), so having key information easily accessible is important. Organizations might consider how they can produce more high quality content that makes an impact on showcasing what makes their brand important, even if it means they must produce slightly less content overall.

While providing high-quality information is very important, there are some kinds of tools that are less common. Among those tools found less often on nonprofit websites in this study were forums and bulletin boards. Just five percent of sites featured forums. These kind of interactive tools may add complexity in terms of setup and ongoing monitoring. Most organizations reviewed in this study, regardless of size, were slow to implement these kinds of tools. It is important to note that some very large national organizations have created such tools. Be the Match is a Minnesota based organization with a large presence across the United States. While they were not studied as a part of this research, they have developed a heavily customized site where people can sign up for their run/walk events and then ask their friends to help them fundraise for these events online (Be the Match). Other organizations utilized third party tools, in lieu of their own websites, for this kind of functionality. Though not discovered in use by any organization as a part of this research, Crowdrise.com is one such website that has provided similar peer-to-peer fundraising capabilities to the custom site of Be the Match. A search of this site for “Minnesota” yielded over 1,000 fundraisers (Crowdrise). Organizations should consider whether tools like this, which have technical functionality for complex transactional and user-to-user activity, meet their needs before investing in creating their own tools. In summary, due to the difficulty even larger nonprofits have had implementing these kinds of tools, organizations should focus first on delivering high quality information before venturing into this space, and if they do, make sure they are clear on what they need and investigate what free or low cost tools are available.

Develop an Ownership and Maintenance Plan

Once the focus of a website has been determined, having processes in place to make sure it is developed and maintained are important. Many of the people interviewed mentioned that they had trouble keeping the content on their sites up-to-date. Having clear ownership of content and a review process is important. For some organizations in this study, a business leader kept tabs on content. In other organizations, a central marketing department made sure the content was kept fresh. Different approaches work best for different organizations, but having a clear owner and making sure the content is reviewed is important.

For many organizations, the majority of the content on their site described programs and services and was fairly static. Some organizations, especially larger ones, had a blog and/or a news section. By writing content for the majority of the site so that it can stay static for long periods of time, while centralizing the news information into a blog, organizations can reduce the complexity of updating their sites. They may need to review much of their content periodically, while working to keep their blog, and perhaps an events section updated frequently. By simplifying their site, organizations can focus their efforts around developing impactful new content. For those organizations with a blog, having a clear content strategy can be helpful. One organization in this study tried to post three stories each week, two about families they served and one about an event. In any given month, they tried to represent their three to four major client groups. Having a simple content strategy like this can make sure the blog is properly resourced and that users will come back to consistent, fresh content that will sell the benefits of the organization. For many organizations, a blog can be a helpful way to organize and display timely content. Blogs in this study were most utilized by larger organizations – smaller organizations should ensure they have the resources to commit to keeping these sites updated before starting them.

Organizations can use many different approaches to staff their web efforts. Many organizations had internal staff manage their website, while others enlisted the assistance of consultants. While consultants can be very helpful, the web consultant interviewed for this project said that it was very important that organizations still make an investment in their websites. External consultants bring in processes and systems, but it is important that people within the organization bring their knowledge of their business to web projects. Most organizations in this study had some internal staff dedicated to content development and updating. Many organizations outsourced some or all of the technical functions. When working on new websites, organizations should seek to understand whether they have the time and expertise for internal development or if they need to outsource this work. Consultants can bring rich knowledge to projects, but internal involvement, particularly around supplying business information, is critical.

Define Key Metrics

Unlike some marketing communications disciplines like public relations, technology exists to track consumer actions for nearly all digital projects. When building websites, organizations should implement a tracking system like Google Analytics. Organizations should define what they want people to be doing on their website and determine what metrics will help them measure these items. Periodically, they should review how they are doing against these metrics to determine their performance. Many organizations interviewed in this study struggled with frequent monitoring, so it is important to be realistic when determining what to measure and how often to measure it. For larger organizations with more staff and site traffic, developing key performance indicators for individual projects and making ongoing changes based on the results can help the organization determine how to make ongoing improvements. For all organizations, taking a look at analytics before making changes can help the organization understand what people are doing on the site currently and where there may be opportunity for improvement.

While marketing websites can be big, complex technical beasts, organizations must remember that, at their heart, they are simply communication tools. Organizations must work to define the purpose of their site, think about their constituents, figure out how they can serve these people, and use their site to inspire greater involvement. For many nonprofits, sites do not need to be flashy and utilize all of the latest technology. They also do not need to utilize all of the most complex data-driven processing technologies used by large e-commerce sites. Complex database driven functionality becomes more necessary as organizations provide more of their service delivery through digital channels. While these tools can be helpful as organizations expand their digital presence, the most important aspect of the website is to showcase what the organization does and how it is making a difference with inspiring and accurate information displayed in a well-organized manner.

Conclusion

The nonprofit industry in Minnesota is extensive, employing 10% of the workforce in the state (Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, 2014, p. 2), and providing many kinds of services through thousands of organizations. In the past twenty years, the Internet has emerged as a key communication channel for all kinds of companies and organizations, and it has become a very important tool in the nonprofit sector.

Through interviewing nonprofit leaders and conducting a content analysis, this research analyzed the current state of nonprofit websites. The study reviewed key audiences served, key elements of a robust site, how organizations invested in their sites, and how organizations defined their purpose. While the review of websites and interviews showed a wide array of sites – as wide as the organizations they represent – some trends certainly did emerge. Most organizations sought to use their site to serve either donors, people seeking service, or both. With content tailored for these audiences, they developed sites with static content that was well organized and error free. Organizations were less likely to put extensive investments into advanced data processing features, although most organizations accepted online donations and provided ways for people to get in touch with them. Many organizations struggled to keep their sites updated. Some organizations found that schedules and clear ownership of sections of content could help. Most organizations used some simple measures (like number of times pages were viewed) to get a general understanding of how much traffic they received, while those that had made a larger investment into their web properties spent more time quantifying their investment and looking for ways they could improve.

In talking to web professionals, nearly all mentioned the importance of accurately demonstrating the organization’s mission and making an emotional connection with the audience. While websites are big, complex, and often expensive to develop and maintain, it is critical that organizations remained focused on the essential basics. By keeping the focus on the top donor and service audiences, keeping content organized and relevant, and coming up with a plan for maintenance, organizations will be well on their way to a competitive and successful web presence.

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Appendix 1

Content Analysis Questions

General Information

1. Name of organization
    a. *[Fill-in]*
2. Website homepage URL
    a. *[Fill-in]*
3. Who is the primary audience for the homepage?
    a. Donors
    b. Volunteers
    c. People accessing services
    d. Not clear – offers general information about organization

Features – Donate

4. Does this site offer information on how to make a donation by mail?
    a. Yes
    b. No
5. Does this site offer the ability to make a donation online with a credit card?
    a. Yes
    b. No

6. How many clicks does it take from the homepage to fill out a form where you can make an online donation?
    a. 1
    b. 2
    c. 3
    d. 4
    e. 5
    f. More *[Fill-in number]*
    g. Not available on site
7. Does this site offer information on making an in-kind gift?
    a. Yes
    b. No
8. Does this site offer stock giving options?
    a. Yes
    b. No
9. Does this site offer planned/major giving options?
    a. Yes
    b. No
10. Does this site have content that thanks donors?
    a. Yes
    b. No

11. Does this site offer stories/reporting on what the organization is doing with the funds it receives?
    a. Yes
    b. No
12. Are the majority of communications to donors positive (showing what can happen with the donor's support) or negative (showing a problem that is occurring that needs to be solved)?
    a. Positive
    b. Negative
    c. Not distinguishable
    d. N/A

Features – Volunteer

13. Does this site provide contact information for how to volunteer?
    a. Yes
    b. No
14. Does this site offer specific volunteer opportunities posted online?
    a. Yes
    b. No

15. Does this site offer the ability to sign up for specific volunteer opportunities online?
    a. Yes
    b. No
16. Are the majority of communications to potential volunteers positive (showing what the organization can do with the volunteer's support) or negative (showing a problem that is occurring that needs to be solved)?
    a. Positive
    b. Negative
    c. Not distinguishable
    d. N/A

Features – Access Services

17. Does this site provide information about how to access their services?
    a. Yes
    b. No
18. Does this site provide contact information for accessing services?
    a. Yes
    b. No
19. Does this site provide the ability to sign up for services/become a member?
    a. Yes
    b. No
20. Does this site provide information about the issue the organization seeks to solve?
    a. Yes
    b. No

21. Does this site provide resources for members/those currently receiving services?
    a. Yes
    b. No
22. Does this site provide forums/discussion board or other way to interact with members/people receiving services?
    a. Yes
    b. No
23. Is the organization's service available online, offline, or both?
    a. Online
    b. Offline
    c. Both
24. Does this site provide more focus on information about the issue or more information about how to get service from the organization?
    a. Issue
    b. Getting service from the organization
25. Are the majority of communications positive (showing what the organization can do) or negative (showing a problem that is occurring that needs to be solved)?
    a. Positive
    b. Negative
    c. Not distinguishable
    d. N/A

Features – Available on Site

26. Interactivity – Which of the following are available on this site:

    a. 26_1. Static content

        i. Yes

        ii. No

    b. 26_2. Blog

        i. Yes

        ii. No

    c. 26_3. News

        i. Yes

        ii. No

    d. 26_4. Social media

        i. Yes

        ii. No

    e. 26_5. Two-way communication (forums/discussion boards, etc.)

        i. Yes

        ii. No

    f. 26_6. Search

        i. Yes

        ii. No

27. Are the navigation labels clear?

    a. Yes

    b. No

28. Is the same navigation and website template used on the majority of pages visited?
    a. Yes
    b. No
29. How well does the website function (no error pages, dead links, etc.) while looking for the information?
    a. 1 – Extremely well
    b. 2 – Very well
    c. 3 – Moderately well
    d. 4 – Slightly well
    e. 5 – Not well at all
30. What is the quality of written content on this site?
    a. 1 – Very low quality
    b. 2 – Low quality
    c. 3 – Moderate quality
    d. 4 – High quality
    e. 5 – Very high quality
31. How easy is it to access information on this site?
    a. 1 – Extremely easy
    b. 2 – Moderately easy
    c. 3 – Neither easy nor difficult
    d. 4 – Moderately difficult
    e. 5 – Extremely difficult

32. Is the site design contemporary?

    a. 1 – Not contemporary

    b. 2 – Somewhat contemporary

    c. 3 – Moderately contemporary

    d. 4 – Contemporary

    e. 5 – Very contemporary

33. Does the design contribute to the organization's brand?

    a. 1 – Very negative brand contribution

    b. 2 – Negative brand contribution

    c. 3 – Moderate brand contribution

    d. 4 – Positive brand contribution

    e. 5 – Very positive brand contribution

34. Using the Extended Model of Internet Commerce Adoption (eMICA), what stage best fits this website's current status?

    a. 1 – Promotion – Basic information

    b. 2 – Promotion – Rich information

    c. 3 – Provision – Low interactivity

    d. 4 – Provision – Medium interactivity

    e. 5 – Provision – High interactivity

    f. 6 – Processing – Advanced applications

Appendix 2

Content Analysis Data

ID	Q1	Q2
1	Bridging Hearts	http://www.bridginghearts.org/
2	Angel of Mercy	http://www.angelofmercyusa.org/
3	Connected Marriage	http://www.connectedmarriage.org/
4	Dads Make a Difference	http://www.dadsmakeadifference.org/
5	Crow Wing County Victim Services	http://www.cwcvs.org/
6	A Place For You	http://www.apfy.org
7	Community Meditation & Restorative Services	http://www.mediationprogram.com/
8	Crescent Cove	http://crescentcove.org/
9	Appetite for Change	http://appetiteforchangemn.org/
10	Bridges of Hope	http://bridgesofhopemn.org/
11	Carol Matheys Center for Children and Families	http://www.cmmcc.org/
12	African Development Center	http://www.adcminnesota.org/
13	Affordable Housing Connections	http://www.ahcinc.net/
14	Damiano Center	http://www.damianocenter.org/
15	Community Aid Elk River Food Shelf	http://www.caerfoodshelf.org/
16	Can Do Canines	http://can-do-canines.org/
17	Arrive Ministries	http://arriveministries.org
18	Anna Marie's Alliance	http://www.annamaries.org/
19	Ascension Place	https://ascensionplace.org/
20	Alexandra House	http://www.alexandrahouse.org/
21	Access of the Red River Valley	http://www.accessrrv.org/
22	Cornerstone	http://cornerstonemn.org/
23	360 Communities	www.360communities.org
24	CEAP	http://www.ceap.org/
25	A Chance to Grow	http://actg.org/
26	Achieve Services, Inc.	http://www.achieveservices.org/
27	Children's Home Society of Minnesota	https://chlss.org/
28	180 Degrees	www.180degrees.org
29	Tubman	http://www.tubman.org/
30	Anoka County Community Action Program	http://www.accap.org/
31	Center for Victims of Torture	http://cvt.org/
32	Channel One Regional Food Bank	http://www.channel-one.org/
33	Community Giving	http://www.communitygiving.org/
34	CRF USA	http://www.crfusa.com/
35	The Salvation Army Northern Division	http://salvationarmynorth.org/
36	Volunteers of America, Minnesota and Wisconsin	https://www.voamnwi.org/
37	Catholic Charities of the Twin Cities	https://www.cctwincities.org/
38	American Refugee Committee	http://www.arcrelief.org/site/PageServer
39	Goodwill Easter Seals of Minnesota	http://www.goodwilleasterseals.org
40	YMCA Twin Cities	http://ymcamn.org

ResponseID	EndDate	NumberPages	AnnualIncome	Q3
R_2uCg9mhl4a4YTkx	5/3/16 1:22	45	0	People accessing services
R_0lxFuBnoHAkSP3v	5/4/16 0:02	5	0	Donors
R_cUWTMhe3U9TnvbT	5/3/16 13:42	29	25387	People accessing services
R_1ZyblRZdDHWhiG9	5/3/16 14:02	36	103536	Not clear
R_1F91mz6bhkt1KMl	5/3/16 13:57	7	110987	People accessing services
R_a3OQuiLIOnLYjHf	5/3/16 23:57	20	256146	Donors
R_4ZQLu5jUDXMBOPr	5/3/16 13:28	1	378423	People accessing services
R_56zd7hIZtmBjbeJ	5/3/16 13:54	168	380404	Donors
R_9MoEbeVbDmHUUK	5/2/16 23:58	303	481744	Not clear
R_byGogBgFiQ4II1D	5/3/16 1:18	1	671969	Donors
R_0qXA59D8qmWDYG	5/3/16 1:47	61	676742	Not clear
R_d73evESQo3mzAwZ	5/3/16 23:59	2870	776116	People accessing services
R_ctF89pXEuEhsdPT	5/3/16 23:59	110	913743	People accessing services
R_bJFfjYXugmdUekl	5/3/16 14:05	235	948125	Donors
R_6mVkCEH2txm6n7n	5/3/16 13:24	86	1254532	People accessing services
R_8uJP0VixJESsikl	5/3/16 1:37	581	1515884	People accessing services
R_7WYqbeD0Gm3vGo5	5/3/16 0:06	159	1676575	Donors
R_71my9NCXxEIBckl	5/4/16 0:00	46	1863558	Donors
R_29P4uuW2euyrYep	5/3/16 0:15	64	2144588	Donors
R_bCS1PwjqvY0sJql	5/2/16 23:18	4970	2450999	Donors
R_bem2pMhzzc2hMCF	5/2/16 22:16	23	2826816	People accessing services
R_3Rk57AEamudtUsB	5/3/16 13:50	134	4127628	People accessing services
R_3O8uUaCME7ExVNr	5/2/16 21:09	437	4389811	People accessing services
R_2bEFmuk63CttqxD	5/3/16 1:59	477	4390615	People accessing services
R_6AyaygjSGum5vsV	5/2/16 21:41	650	4657728	People accessing services
R_0kMhLnxemIJdFXv	5/2/16 22:29	1	5205848	Donors
R_TcPSHlGy2UqGDAJ	7/5/16 15:02	697	6843000	People accessing services
R_1U2UM6j11JKKjDD	5/4/16 0:02	1	8439681	People accessing services
R_21pl1zPsYwdrtP5	7/5/16 13:45	160	10417100	People accessing services
R_bgyDVqowIqtj4CV	5/2/16 23:51	305	12539076	Donors
R_beKea0EpUiIxGb7	7/5/16 14:09	1190	15905655	Donors
R_6zjFjse9CLJR2O9	5/3/16 12:27	270	15957470	Donors
R_9FtM8DLPYaIJ6w5	5/3/16 2:15	251	23910932	Not clear
R_9vG2Iipb4dSSuXz	5/3/16 13:34	637	27109793	Donors
R_qyjQQ4UiseDKICJ	7/5/16 15:29	7260	29676519	Not clear
R_2SoUjutNSvm0xAU	7/5/16 14:52	554	42043073	Not clear
R_3ipVC2Z4Ufgs4Ad	7/5/16 14:25	480	46564310	Donors
R_eJKLoe0YVyK9RVX	5/2/16 23:35	731	47931512	Donors
R_1FeuC7Ighe0eOPd	7/5/16 15:23	3550	53045225	People accessing services
R_3MntZVOdTdo8W0Z	7/5/16 14:37	4350	146821708	People accessing services

Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15
No	Yes	1	No	No	No	No	Yes	Not distinguishable	No	No	No
Yes	Yes	2	No	No	No	No	No	Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No
No	Yes	2	No	No	No	No	No	Not distinguishable	No	No	No
Yes	No	7	No	No	No	No	No	Not distinguishable	No	No	No
Yes	No	7	No	No	No	Yes	No	Not distinguishable	Yes	No	Yes
No	Yes	1	Yes	No	No	No	No	Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	2	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No
Yes	Yes	1	No	No	No	No	No	Not distinguishable	Yes	No	Yes
No	Yes	1	No	No	No	No	Yes	Positive	Yes	No	No
Yes	Yes	2	No	No	No	No	Yes	Positive	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	2	No	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	No
Yes	Yes	1	No	No	No	No	No	Not distinguishable	No	No	No
No	No	7	No	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	No
No	Yes	2	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Not distinguishable	Yes	No	Yes
No	Yes	2	Yes	No	No	No	No	Not distinguishable	No	No	No
No	Yes	1	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	Yes
No	Yes	1	No	No	No	No	No	Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No
Yes	Yes	2	Yes	No	No	No	No	Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No
Yes	Yes	2	No	No	No	No	No	Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	1	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Positive	Yes	No	Yes
No	Yes	2	No	No	No	No	No	Positive	No	No	No
Yes	Yes	2	Yes	No	No	No	No	Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	Yes
No	Yes	1	No	No	No	No	No	Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No
Yes	Yes	1	Yes	No	No	No	No	Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	Yes
No	Yes	1	No	No	No	No	No	Positive	No	No	No
Yes	Yes	2	No	No	No	No	No	Not distinguishable	No	No	No
Yes	Yes	2	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Not distinguishable	No	No	No
No	Yes	2	No	No	No	No	No	Positive	No	No	No
Yes	Yes	3	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	1	No	No	No	No	No	Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No
No	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Positive	Yes	Yes	No
Yes	Yes	2	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Positive	Yes	No	No
No	Yes	2	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Not distinguishable	No	No	No
No	No	7	No	No	No	Yes	No	Not distinguishable	No	No	No
Yes	Yes	1	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Positive	Yes	Yes	No
No	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	1	No	No	No	No	No	Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No
Yes	Yes	2	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Positive	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	2	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Positive	No	No	No

Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24
N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Both	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Both	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
N/A	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
N/A	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
N/A	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Positive	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	No	No	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Positive	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Both	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Positive	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Positive	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
N/A	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
N/A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
N/A	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Positive	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Offline	Issue
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
N/A	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
N/A	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Positive	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
Positive	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization
N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Offline	Getting service from the organization

Q25	Q26_1	Q26_2	Q26_3	Q26_4	Q26_5	Q26_6	Q27	Q28	Q29
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	4 - Slightly well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	3 - Moderately well
Positive	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	3 - Moderately well
Positive	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Positive	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	3 - Moderately well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	3 - Moderately well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	3 - Moderately well
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Positive	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	3 - Moderately well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	3 - Moderately well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Positive	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	3 - Moderately well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	3 - Moderately well
Positive	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Positive	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Positive	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	3 - Moderately well
Positive	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Positive	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	3 - Moderately well
Not distinguishable	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	3 - Moderately well
Positive	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	2 - Very well
Negative	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	3 - Moderately well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	3 - Moderately well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	3 - Moderately well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Not distinguishable	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Positive	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Positive	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	2 - Very well
Positive	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	1- Extremely well

Q30	Q31	Q32
4 - High quality	2 - Moderately easy	4 - Contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	2 - Moderately easy	2 - Somewhat contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	2 - Moderately easy	2 - Somewhat contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	3 - Neither easy nor difficult	1 - Not contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	3 - Neither easy nor difficult	2 - Somewhat contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	2 - Moderately easy	2 - Somewhat contemporary
4 - High quality	2 - Moderately easy	3 - Moderately contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	3 - Neither easy nor difficult	3 - Moderately contemporary
2 - Low quality	3 - Neither easy nor difficult	5 - Very ontemporary
4 - High quality	2 - Moderately easy	4 - Contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	2 - Moderately easy	2 - Somewhat contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	4 - Moderatly difficult	2 - Somewhat contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	3 - Neither easy nor difficult	3 - Moderately contemporary
4 - High quality	2 - Moderately easy	2 - Somewhat contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	4 - Moderatly difficult	2 - Somewhat contemporary
4 - High quality	2 - Moderately easy	4 - Contemporary
2 - Low quality	2 - Moderately easy	2 - Somewhat contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	2 - Moderately easy	2 - Somewhat contemporary
2 - Low quality	2 - Moderately easy	2 - Somewhat contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	3 - Neither easy nor difficult	4 - Contemporary
4 - High quality	2 - Moderately easy	3 - Moderately contemporary
4 - High quality	3 - Neither easy nor difficult	3 - Moderately contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	3 - Neither easy nor difficult	3 - Moderately contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	2 - Moderately easy	4 - Contemporary
4 - High quality	2 - Moderately easy	4 - Contemporary
4 - High quality	3 - Neither easy nor difficult	3 - Moderately contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	2 - Moderately easy	4 - Contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	2 - Moderately easy	3 - Moderately contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	2 - Moderately easy	2 - Somewhat contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	2 - Moderately easy	3 - Moderately contemporary
4 - High quality	2 - Moderately easy	3 - Moderately contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	2 - Moderately easy	3 - Moderately contemporary
4 - High quality	2 - Moderately easy	4 - Contemporary
4 - High quality	3 - Neither easy nor difficult	2 - Somewhat contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	3 - Neither easy nor difficult	3 - Moderately contemporary
4 - High quality	2 - Moderately easy	5 - Very ontemporary
3 - Moderate quality	2 - Moderately easy	4 - Contemporary
4 - High quality	2 - Moderately easy	2 - Somewhat contemporary
3 - Moderate quality	3 - Neither easy nor difficult	3 - Moderately contemporary
4 - High quality	1 - Extremely easy	5 - Very ontemporary

Q33	Q34
4 - Positive brand contribution	4 - Provision - Medium interactivity
3 - Moderate brand contribution	1 - Promotion - Basic information
3 - Moderate brand contribution	4 - Provision - Medium interactivity
2 - Negative brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
3 - Moderate brand contribution	1 - Promotion - Basic information
3 - Moderate brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
3 - Moderate brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
3 - Moderate brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
4 - Positive brand contribution	3 - Provision - Low interactivity
4 - Positive brand contribution	3 - Provision - Low interactivity
2 - Negative brand contribution	1 - Promotion - Basic information
2 - Negative brand contribution	1 - Promotion - Basic information
3 - Moderate brand contribution	1 - Promotion - Basic information
3 - Moderate brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
2 - Negative brand contribution	1 - Promotion - Basic information
4 - Positive brand contribution	3 - Provision - Low interactivity
2 - Negative brand contribution	1 - Promotion - Basic information
2 - Negative brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
4 - Positive brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
4 - Positive brand contribution	3 - Provision - Low interactivity
3 - Moderate brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
3 - Moderate brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
4 - Positive brand contribution	3 - Provision - Low interactivity
4 - Positive brand contribution	3 - Provision - Low interactivity
4 - Positive brand contribution	3 - Provision - Low interactivity
3 - Moderate brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
4 - Positive brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
3 - Moderate brand contribution	3 - Provision - Low interactivity
3 - Moderate brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
2 - Negative brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
3 - Moderate brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
3 - Moderate brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
3 - Moderate brand contribution	3 - Provision - Low interactivity
3 - Moderate brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
3 - Moderate brand contribution	3 - Provision - Low interactivity
5 - Very positive brand contribution	3 - Provision - Low interactivity
4 - Positive brand contribution	3 - Provision - Low interactivity
2 - Negative brand contribution	1 - Promotion - Basic information
3 - Moderate brand contribution	2 - Promotion - Rich information
5 - Very positive brand contribution	4 - Provision - Medium interactivity

Appendix 3

Content Analysis Results

Number of Pages

Under $1,000,000

Average: **277.9286**

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Average: **693.3636**

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Average: **374.8571**

Over $20,000,000

Average: **2226.62**

All Data

Average: **798.875**

3. Who is the primary audience for the homepage?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Donors	5	35.7143%
Not clear	3	21.4286%
People accessing services	6	42.8571%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Donors	4	36.3636%
People accessing services	7	63.6364%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Donors	4	57.1429%
People accessing services	3	42.8571%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Donors	3	37.5%
Not clear	3	37.5%
People accessing services	2	25%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
Donors	16	40%
Not clear	6	15%
People accessing services	18	45%

4. Does this site offer information on how to make a donation by mail?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	6	42.8571%
Yes	8	57.1429%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	6	54.5455%
Yes	5	45.4545%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	2	28.5714%
Yes	5	71.4286%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	3	37.5%
Yes	5	62.5%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	17	42.5%
Yes	23	57.5%

5. Does this site offer the ability to make a donation online with a credit card?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	3	21.4286%
Yes	11	78.5714%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	11	100%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	7	100%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	1	12.5%
Yes	7	87.5%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	4	10%
Yes	36	90%

6. How many clicks does it take from the homepage to fill out a form where you can make an online donation?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
1	5	35.7143%
2	6	42.8571%
7	3	21.4286%

Average: 2.7143

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
1	6	54.5455%
2	5	45.4545%

Average: 1.4545

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
1	2	28.5714%
2	4	57.1429%
3	1	14.2857%

Average: 1.8571

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
1	3	37.5%
2	4	50%
7	1	12.5%

Average: 2.25

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
1	16	40%
2	19	47.5%
3	1	2.5%
7	4	10%

Average: 2.125

7. Does this site offer information on making an in-kind gift?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	13	92.8571%
Yes	1	7.1429%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	5	45.4545%
Yes	6	54.5455%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	3	42.8571%
Yes	4	57.1429%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	4	50%
Yes	4	50%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	25	62.5%
Yes	15	37.5%

8. Does this site offer stock giving options?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	13	92.8571%
Yes	1	7.1429%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	11	100%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	3	42.8571%
Yes	4	57.1429%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	3	37.5%
Yes	5	62.5%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	30	75%
Yes	10	25%

9. Does this site offer planned/major giving options?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	13	92.8571%
Yes	1	7.1429%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	11	100%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	4	57.1429%
Yes	3	42.8571%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	2	25%
Yes	6	75%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	30	75%
Yes	10	25%

10. Does this site have content that thanks donors?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	12	85.7143%
Yes	2	14.2857%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	11	100%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	7	100%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	5	62.5%
Yes	3	37.5%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	35	87.5%
Yes	5	12.5%

11. Does this site offer stories/reporting on what the organization is doing with the funds it receives?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	10	71.4286%
Yes	4	28.5714%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	9	81.8182%
Yes	2	18.1818%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	6	85.7143%
Yes	1	14.2857%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	5	62.5%
Yes	3	37.5%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	30	75%
Yes	10	25%

12. Are the majority of communications to donors positive (showing what can happen with the donor's support) or negative (showing a problem that is occurring that needs to be solved)?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
N/A	2	14.2857%
Not distinguishable	10	71.4286%
Positive	2	14.2857%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Not distinguishable	8	72.7273%
Positive	3	27.2727%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Not distinguishable	4	57.1429%
Positive	3	42.8571%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Not distinguishable	5	62.5%
Positive	3	37.5%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
N/A	2	5%
Not distinguishable	27	67.5%
Positive	11	27.5%

13. Does this site provide contact information for how to volunteer?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	6	42.8571%
Yes	8	57.1429%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	3	27.2727%
Yes	8	72.7273%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	3	42.8571%
Yes	4	57.1429%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	3	37.5%
Yes	5	62.5%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	15	37.5%
Yes	25	62.5%

14. Does this site offer specific volunteer opportunities posted online?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	12	85.7143%
Yes	2	14.2857%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	5	45.4545%
Yes	6	54.5455%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	4	57.1429%
Yes	3	42.8571%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	4	50%
Yes	4	50%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	25	62.5%
Yes	15	37.5%

15. Does this site offer the ability to sign up for specific volunteer opportunities online?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	9	64.2857%
Yes	5	35.7143%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	6	54.5455%
Yes	5	45.4545%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	6	85.7143%
Yes	1	14.2857%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	5	62.5%
Yes	3	37.5%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	26	65%
Yes	14	35%

16. Are the majority of communications to potential volunteers positive (showing what the organization can do with the volunteer's support) or negative (showing a problem that is occurring that needs to be solved)?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
N/A	4	28.5714%
Not distinguishable	10	71.4286%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
N/A	1	9.0909%
Not distinguishable	6	54.5455%
Positive	4	36.3636%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
N/A	3	42.8571%
Not distinguishable	3	42.8571%
Positive	1	14.2857%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
N/A	3	37.5%
Not distinguishable	3	37.5%
Positive	2	25%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
N/A	11	27.5%
Not distinguishable	22	55%
Positive	7	17.5%

17. Does this site provide information about how to access their services?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	2	14.2857%
Yes	12	85.7143%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	1	9.0909%
Yes	10	90.9091%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	1	14.2857%
Yes	6	85.7143%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	8	100%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	4	10%
Yes	36	90%

18. Does this site provide contact information for accessing services?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	5	35.7143%
Yes	9	64.2857%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	3	27.2727%
Yes	8	72.7273%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	7	100%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	2	25%
Yes	6	75%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	10	25%
Yes	30	75%

19. Does this site provide the ability to sign up for services/become a member?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	13	92.8571%
Yes	1	7.1429%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	9	81.8182%
Yes	2	18.1818%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	6	85.7143%
Yes	1	14.2857%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	7	87.5%
Yes	1	12.5%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	35	87.5%
Yes	5	12.5%

20. Does this site provide information about the issue the organization seeks to solve?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	10	71.4286%
Yes	4	28.5714%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	9	81.8182%
Yes	2	18.1818%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	4	57.1429%
Yes	3	42.8571%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	6	75%
Yes	2	25%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	29	72.5%
Yes	11	27.5%

21. Does this site provide resources for members/those currently receiving services?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	10	71.4286%
Yes	4	28.5714%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	11	100%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	6	85.7143%
Yes	1	14.2857%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	6	75%
Yes	2	25%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	33	82.5%
Yes	7	17.5%

22. Does this site provide forums/discussion board or other way to interact with members/people receiving services?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	12	85.7143%
Yes	2	14.2857%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	11	100%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	7	100%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	7	87.5%
Yes	1	12.5%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	37	92.5%
Yes	3	7.5%

23. Is the organization's service available online, offline, or both?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Both	2	14.2857%
Offline	12	85.7143%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Both	1	9.0909%
Offline	10	90.9091%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Offline	7	100%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Offline	8	100%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
Both	3	7.5%
Offline	37	92.5%

24. Does this site provide more focus on information about the issue or more information about how to get service from the organization?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Getting service from the organization	14	100%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Getting service from the organization	11	100%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Getting service from the organization	6	85.7143%
Issue	1	14.2857%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Getting service from the organization	8	100%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
Getting service from the organization	39	97.5%
Issue	1	2.5%

25. Are the majority of communications positive (showing what the organization can do) or negative (showing a problem that is occurring that needs to be solved)?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Not distinguishable	11	78.5714%
Positive	3	21.4286%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Not distinguishable	7	63.6364%
Positive	4	36.3636%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Negative	1	14.2857%
Not distinguishable	2	28.5714%
Positive	4	57.1429%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Not distinguishable	5	62.5%
Positive	3	37.5%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
Negative	1	2.5%
Not distinguishable	25	62.5%
Positive	14	35%

26_1. Interactivity – Is static content present on this site?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	14	100%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	11	100%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	7	100%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	8	100%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	40	100%

26_2. Interactivity – Is a blog present on this site?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	13	92.8571%
Yes	1	7.1429%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	7	63.6364%
Yes	4	36.3636%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	4	57.1429%
Yes	3	42.8571%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	6	75%
Yes	2	25%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	30	75%
Yes	10	25%

26_3. Interactivity – Is a news section present on this site?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	12	85.7143%
Yes	2	14.2857%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	6	54.5455%
Yes	5	45.4545%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	6	85.7143%
Yes	1	14.2857%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	3	37.5%
Yes	5	62.5%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	27	67.5%
Yes	13	32.5%

26_4. Interactivity – Are social media links present on this site?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	7	50%
Yes	7	50%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	2	18.1818%
Yes	9	81.8182%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	2	28.5714%
Yes	5	71.4286%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	8	100%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	11	27.5%
Yes	29	72.5%

26_5. Interactivity – Are two-way communication tools (forums, etc.) available on this site?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	12	85.7143%
Yes	2	14.2857%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	11	100%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	7	100%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	8	100%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	38	95%
Yes	2	5%

26_6. Interactivity – Is search present on this site?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	12	85.7143%
Yes	2	14.2857%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	8	72.7273%
Yes	3	27.2727%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	5	71.4286%
Yes	2	28.5714%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	2	25%
Yes	6	75%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	27	67.5%
Yes	13	32.5%

27. Are the navigation labels clear?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	14	100%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	11	100%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
No	1	14.2857%
Yes	6	85.7143%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	8	100%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
No	1	2.5%
Yes	39	97.5%

28. Is the same navigation and website template used on the majority of pages visited?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	14	100%

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	11	100%

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	7	100%

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	8	100%

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
Yes	40	100%

29. How well does the website function (no error pages, dead links, etc.) while looking for the information?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Very well	9	64.2857%
3 – Moderately well	4	28.5714%
4 – Slightly well	1	7.1429%

Average: 2.4286

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Very well	6	54.5455%
3 – Moderately well	5	45.4545%

Average: 2.4545

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Very well	4	57.1429%
3 – Moderately well	3	42.8571%

Average: 2.4286

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
1 – Extremely well	1	12.5%
2 – Very well	4	50%
3 – Moderately well	3	37.5%

Average: 2.25

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
1 – Extremely well	1	2.5%
2 – Very well	23	57.5%
3 – Moderately well	15	37.5%
4 – Slightly well	1	2.5%

Average: 2.4

30. What is the quality of written content on this site?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Low quality	1	7.1429%
3 – Moderate quality	9	64.2857%
4 – High quality	4	28.5714%

Average: 3.2143

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Low quality	2	18.1818%
3 – Moderate quality	5	45.4545%
4 – High quality	4	36.3636%

Average: 3.1818

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
3 – Moderate quality	5	71.4286%
4 – High quality	2	28.5714%

Average: 3.2857

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
3 – Moderate quality	3	37.5%
4 – High quality	5	62.5%

Average: 3.625

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Low quality	3	7.5%
3 – Moderate quality	22	55%
4 – High quality	15	37.5%

Average: 3.3

31. How easy is it to access information on this site?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Moderately easy	8	57.1429%
3 – Neither easy nor difficult	5	35.7143%
4 – Moderately difficult	1	7.1429%

Average: 2.5

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Moderately easy	7	63.6364%
3 – Neither easy nor difficult	3	27.2727%
4 – Moderately difficult	1	9.0909%

Average: 2.4545

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Moderately easy	6	85.7143%
3 – Neither easy nor difficult	1	14.2857%

Average: 2.1429

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
1 – Extremely easy	1	12.5%
2 – Moderately easy	4	50%
3 – Neither easy nor difficult	3	37.5%

Average: 2.25

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
1 – Extremely easy	1	2.5%
2 – Moderately easy	25	62.5%
3 – Neither easy nor difficult	12	30%
4 – Moderately difficult	2	5%

Average: 2.375

32. Is the site design contemporary?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
1 – Not contemporary	1	7.1429%
2 – Somewhat contemporary	7	50%
3 – Moderately contemporary	3	21.4286%
4 – Contemporary	2	14.2857%
5 – Very contemporary	1	7.1429%

Average: 2.6429

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Somewhat contemporary	4	36.3636%
3 – Moderately contemporary	3	27.2727%
4 – Contemporary	4	36.3636%

Average: 3

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Somewhat contemporary	1	14.2857%
3 – Moderately contemporary	5	71.4286%
4 – Contemporary	1	14.2857%

Average: 3

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Somewhat contemporary	2	25%
3 – Moderately contemporary	2	25%
4 – Contemporary	2	25%
5 – Very contemporary	2	25%

Average: 3.5

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
1 – Not contemporary	1	2.5%
2 – Somewhat contemporary	14	35%
3 – Moderately contemporary	13	32.5%
4 – Contemporary	9	22.5%
5 – Very contemporary	3	7.5%

Average: 2.975

33. Does the design contribute to the organization's brand?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Negative brand contribution	3	21.4286%
3 – Moderate brand contribution	8	57.1429%
4 – Positive brand contribution	3	21.4286%

Average: 3

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Negative brand contribution	3	27.2727%
3 – Moderate brand contribution	2	18.1818%
4 – Positive brand contribution	6	54.5455%

Average: 3.2727

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Negative brand contribution	1	14.2857%
3 – Moderate brand contribution	5	71.4286%
4 – Positive brand contribution	1	14.2857%

Average: 3

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Negative brand contribution	1	12.5%
3 – Moderate brand contribution	4	50%
4 – Positive brand contribution	1	12.5%
5 – Very positive brand contribution	2	25%

Average: 3.5

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Negative brand contribution	8	20%
3 – Moderate brand contribution	19	47.5%
4 – Positive brand contribution	11	27.5%
5 – Very positive brand contribution	2	5%

Average: 3.175

34. Using the Extended Model of Internet Commerce Adoption (eMICA), what stage best fits this website's current status?

Under $1,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
1 – Promotion – Basic information	5	35.7143%
2 – Promotion – Rich information	5	35.7143%
3 – Provision – Low interactivity	2	14.2857%
4 – Provision – Medium interactivity	2	14.2857%

Average: 2.0714

$1,000,000 – $5,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
1 – Promotion – Basic information	2	18.1818%
2 – Promotion – Rich information	4	36.3636%
3 – Provision – Low interactivity	5	45.4545%

Average: 2.2727

$5,000,000 – $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
2 – Promotion – Rich information	6	85.7143%
3 – Provision – Low interactivity	1	14.2857%

Average: 2.1429

Over $20,000,000

Label	Number	Percent
1 – Promotion – Basic information	1	12.5%
2 – Promotion – Rich information	2	25%
3 – Provision – Low interactivity	4	50%
4 – Provision – Medium interactivity	1	12.5%

Average: 2.625

All Data

Label	Number	Percent
1 – Promotion – Basic information	8	20%
2 – Promotion – Rich information	17	42.5%
3 – Provision – Low interactivity	12	30%
4 – Provision – Medium interactivity	3	7.5%

Average: 2.25

Appendix 4

Interview Questions

Organizations

1. What audience do you reach through your website?
2. What kinds of content do you put on your website? How do you decide what to put up?
3. Do you have any processes in place to keep the site fresh? Who makes sure it stays up-to-date?
4. How do you decide when to change the designs or add functionality into your website? Are there features you would like to add?
5. How do you measure success?
6. What do the best nonprofit websites look like?

Consultant

1. How do you help clients think through who their key audiences should be for their websites? What audiences do many organizations try to reach? Do organizations need help in reaching the correct audiences?
2. How do you help organizations decide on what to put up on their websites – what kinds of content to put on their website?
3. How do you advise organizations on when to make changes to their site design or add significant functionality into their websites? How do you help them build appropriate plans?
4. How do you advise clients on technology that will best support their goals? Why Drupal? How do you develop toolsets that will benefit for many organizations?

5. How do you measure success? What factors do you suggest organizations look at?

6. How can organizations get the most out of working with an agency partner?

7. What do the best nonprofit websites look like?

Appendix 5

Interview List

The names of each person interviewed are included below. When referring to interviews, this paper mentions interview numbers. These numbers were generated by the order in which the interviews were conducted (the first interview conducted is interview one, and so on). For the sake of some anonymity, names of the people interviewed are listed on this list in alphabetical order and not in the order the interviews were conducted.

David Aman

Online Content Coordinator

Goodwill-Easter Seals of Minnesota

Mark Bauer

New and Traditional Media Manager

Catholic Charities of the Twin Cities

Dan Fellini

Web Developer

Nonprofit Technology Network

Drew Gorton

Founder and CEO Emeritus

Gorton Studios

Erin Heisler

Web Communications Specialist

The Adoption Programs of Children's Home Society and Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota

Nicole Nicklin

Online Communications Manager

Salvation Army Northern Division

Amber Richard

Digital Marketing Director

YMCA of the Twin Cities

Jeff Smith

Communications Director

Volunteers of America, Minnesota and Wisconsin

C.C. Strom

Former Communications Manager

Center for Victims of Torture

Emily Truscott

Director of Communications

Tubman